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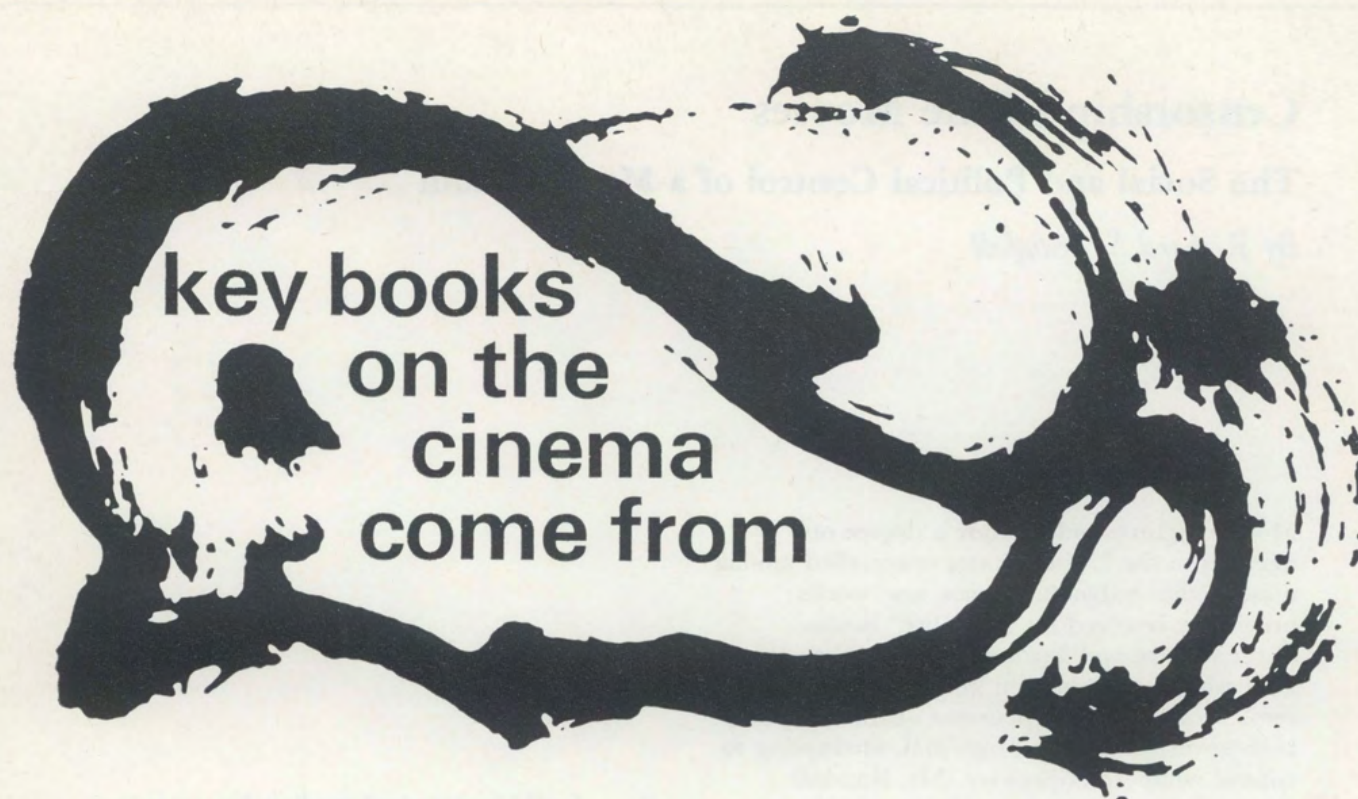
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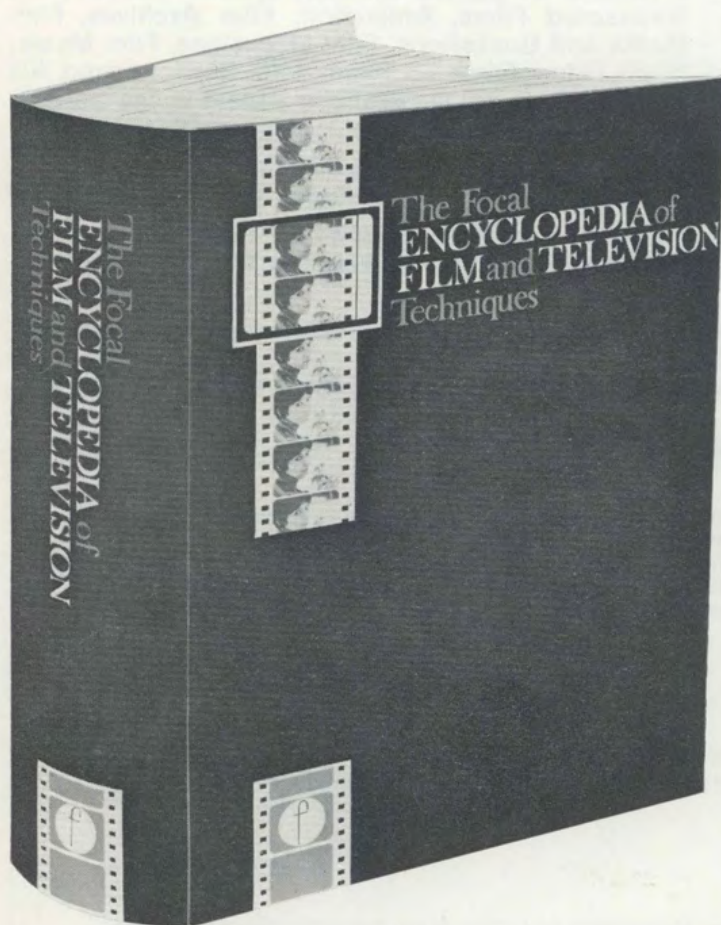
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SIGHT^{AND} SOUND

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

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Contact prints of scenes and rehearsals from Kevin Billington's "The Rise and Rise of Michael Rimmer" with Peter Cook.

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SEVENTY

Penelope Houston

EXACTLY TEN YEARS AGO, we advanced in this magazine some hesitant speculations for the 1960s. It wasn't a bad moment for crystal-gazing, halfway between New Wave summer at Cannes (1959 was the *annus mirabilis* of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and *A Bout de Souffle* and *Hiroshima*) and the bizarre hullabaloo of the *L'Avventura* screening in 1960. The 1950s had dragged on too long and too boringly, with the cinema in a constant state of nervous fret about its vanishing audience, and by the end of the decade anyone could feel change in the air. Actually, it may be worth noting now some of the titles of 1960/61: *La Notte*, *Moderato Cantabile*, *Viridiana*, *Shadows*, *Lola*, *All Fall Down*, *Le Petit Soldat*, *Psycho*, *Splendour in the Grass*, *Cuba Si!*, *Il Posto*, *Accattone*, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, *A Taste of Honey*, *Paris Nous Appartient*, *Salvatore Giuliano*, *Tirez sur le Pianiste*. Almost ten years ago—or doesn't one, rather, feel much more like saying *only* ten years ago?

The attraction of guesswork is not so much how it reads at the time, but what it looks like in retrospect. And looking back at this particular set of guesses, what strikes one is less the individual hits and misses (we got quite a lot right, with a few rather notable clangers) than the whole feeling of other times, other moods and values and critical assumptions. It is not merely that the cinema as such has changed more during the 1960s than anyone would reasonably have expected—more probably than in any previous ten-year stretch, including that which encompassed the coming of sound. It is that everyone now at least dimly realises, as possibly only a few people did back in 1960, that we are living through a period of instability and moral upheaval at least equalling that of the 1840s in Europe. From the generally accepted, more or less unquestioned Liberal-Christian assumptions and tolerances, we have moved out on to the glacier, watching the fissures widening in some of the old certainties and listening to the rumble of all

that noisily cracking ice.

In the cinema, specifically, 1960 felt like the beginning of something; and at various moments during the decade film-makers have been able to extend their own language to isolate and make tangible feelings previously only in the air. They have been ahead of us not merely in their silliness (perpetrating, for instance, the whole ghastly business of swinging London) but in their sensibility: films as varied as *The Eclipse* and *Muriel* and *Pierrot le Fou* have expanded consciousness. But, for the moment at least, that might seem to be over. Cinema had moved fast, and from the moment when film-makers in the more conventionally minded industries began using the new languages, the publicists and salesmen of change moved in to persuade us that it was still moving faster than ever. I am not so sure that it is; and 1970 feels rather more like the end of something, with clues and hints to another beginning still just out of sight.

* * *

It is no climate, in other words, for useful speculation, other than in the fairly safe areas of technological change—areas important in that they concern the way we see films, and so in the long run also the films we see. Ten years ago, I see we were suggesting that by 1970 there would be an effective 3-D system that didn't involve audiences wearing Polaroid glasses to get the screen in focus. It hasn't yet arrived, probably because the cinema hasn't felt in that much need of a new trick; but it is still on the way—now through Holography—and it still looks a likelier permanent bet than the fractured screen techniques which leapt so rapidly and unadventurously from Expo to Hollywood.

But the real technological certainty for the 1970s seems to be the video-cassette, something no more cumbersome or hard to handle than a tape-recorder cassette, which can be slotted into a television set and then played and replayed. Firms like Disney are already interested, though at present mainly in the

educational film possibilities. RCA have recently demonstrated the prototype for something with the rather uninviting name of Selectavision, described as 'the first consumer product to apply lasers' and as 'a personalised service for viewers'. They predict a 400-dollar home unit on the market soon after 1972.

Theoretically, the possibilities are enormous: feature films at last potentially as accessible as books or records, an end to the expensive business of shipping prints around the world, and to the problems at present bedevilling any really systematic use of films in education or research—the difficulty, expense, and often the plain impossibility of getting hold of the material. Practically, one is rather more sceptical. Whatever happened to Pay Television, that other 'service for viewers' . . . ? There is always the question of how many companies would be prepared to release how many films, on a basis of royalty and purchase rather than of renting out prints on whose whereabouts they can keep strict control; and whether enough of the public would want the service to enable prices to be brought down to a realistic level. For educational, audio-visual purposes, the cassette would certainly seem to be the next significant stage. For entertainment. . . ? Perhaps.

In any case, the cinema in Britain still has big-scale colour television to cope with, and that seems bound to take another knock at its already depleted audience. Ten years ago, ticket sales were down to less than twelve million a week, and Duncan Crow was hopefully guessing in *SIGHT AND SOUND* at a stabilisation point of about ten million. But if the 1950s' rate of decline kept up, he forecast, 'then in 1969 the average weekly attendance would be only about 5 million—and at that level surely the industry as we now know it would have ceased to exist.' Well, in 1969 the shrinking audience was down to below the five million a week mark (4.7 million average for the first four months of the year, against 5.2 million in the same period for 1968), though the film industry as we know it—like civilisation as we know it—still contrives to look tolerably durable. But, as an indicator of the ways of mass entertainment, it is worth remembering that less than twenty-five years ago they were selling tickets at the rate of thirty million a week.

* * *

This dwindling world-wide audience is still partly the explanation for a good deal that happens in the cinema, though it has become so much one of the facts of business life that we hear less about it than we used to. We have seen the big Hollywood companies, for instance, being taken over one by one, until Fox (on the verge of sonorously advancing its title to 21st Century-Fox) is now the only one still controlled by a film-maker. The cost even to Fox of two publicised failures, *Star!* and *Dr. Dolittle*, is a cautionary tale of 1969 that the industry is unlikely to forget quickly; and the really rather horrifying scale of film industry investment is brought home in a single quotation from an interview with Darryl Zanuck, now finally the last tycoon. 'We have 250 million dollars [rather more than *one hundred million pounds*] tied up in films which are unreleased and either shooting, editing or waiting to be seen. . . . Never can we be in so deep to the banks again that when we gamble something we take all the risk.'

In 1969, the big Hollywood companies have been calling a series of temporary production halts, taking stock of where their extraordinary industry stands. The mood for the early 1970s looks like one of retrenchment, or at least a more cautious relation of product to market potential; which in turn seems to put British film-making, still more than 80 per cent dependent on American finance, even more at risk than it has always been. French and Italian cinema economics remain vulnerable and precarious. Altogether, showmanship looks, each year, like a more neurotic pursuit, a compulsive gambling in which the stakes have got out of hand, and the big men swapping millions at the *chemin de fer* table are looking over their shoulders at the small-stake man playing the roulette wheel who has backed a single number and been lucky (a number, perhaps, called *Easy Rider*).

Still, the film industries keep it up remarkably, skidding about on the uncertain slopes of public taste, guessing and dodging and making what look like some increasingly cynical assumptions about their audience. Andrew Sarris usefully pointed out in our last issue that the relative stability of the black audience in America has had at least as much to do with the rise of the black movie star as reduced racial feeling; and that the misunderstood teenager simply took over from the misunderstood housewife because the housewives are staying at home and at least some teenagers may be hoped to be in the cinema. And increasingly, the Western cinema turns up the mirror of an advanced fantasy world: fantasies of violence (from 007 onwards), of trendiness (the Lelouch syndrome, epidemic disease of the 1960s), of voyeur sex. 'We have seen the First World War turned into a superior musical and the Crimean conflict reduced to phantasmagoria; James Bond and Alf Garnett have been our national heroes,' Eric Rhode wrote severely about our national industry some months ago in *The Listener*. 'There has been a steady evacuation of social content and social meaning: brightness and caricature dance in a void.' It is a depressing generalisation, but a difficult one to refute; and if one had to pick a single adjective to describe British film-making over the last five years or so, irresponsible certainly isn't the last word that would come to mind.

British cinema is not yet, on the whole, violent. At its worst, it has suggested another jaded party, dragging exhaustedly on into the night in its bedraggled fancy dress surrounded by its odds and ends of boutique bric-à-brac, and deaf to the ambulance sirens coming louder up the street. The world of *Bonnie and Clyde* or *The Wild Bunch*, those curiously elegiac and despairing (but not irresponsible) celebrations of violence and lost innocence, is a long way away; and if one compares, say, the actual impact of gunfire in *If . . .* with either of the American films, one is maybe looking at the differences between the traditions of a violent and a non-violent cinema—and perhaps cinemas with or without traditions of innocence. 'It's the writing on the wall,' Lindsay Anderson said of his own responsible film; and 'We are the writing on your wall' was one of the chalked messages left behind to glower down on Green Park after the London Street Commune's activities in Piccadilly. As coincidences go, this one in minatory messages at least strikes home.

But what comes next, when the excursion into fantasy is so obviously a major social symptom? The occupation of houses in Piccadilly is, in a sense, fantasy at its most extreme, enacted in that shaded area where a protest becomes indistinguishable from a happening: another fancy dress charade, played out for the cameras and the sated and unconfident audience, with all the derelict trappings. Already, the last ironic touch has been added; someone is registering the title '144 Piccadilly' for a possible film.

* * *

And, of course, there is the great international fantasy of the new permissiveness, advancing with a speed and inevitability which I don't think anyone would have foreseen even three or four years ago. One may be mildly enchanted by the recent comment of Samuel Z. Arkoff, one of the chiefs of American International Pictures, that only the older audiences are still getting a kick out of 'scenes of people rolling around in bed with flashing lights and queer music,' while their yawning juniors are off buying popcorn. Nudity in the cinema has managed to move from titillation to tedium with almost no intervening area of straightforward acceptance—which is in itself tolerably remarkable. And even commercially, the cinema's love affair with the nude scene is subjected to its own law of diminishing returns: if *all* the films have nudes, just as all the films have colour, then the great cancelling-out process repeats itself. But who, in any case, can really tell at the moment whether this rushing of the old, dilapidated barriers set by censorship represents a gambler's last fling, the ultimate assumption that if the audience can't be caught by stars, or stories, or yet larger screens they can still be snatched as voyeurs, or how far new freedoms are being significantly fought for and can be guarded against any possible puritan backlash? Oh my Calcutta, my new found land. . .

If the metaphor didn't seem absurdly back to front, one could say that in going naked, overground cinema has snatched the clothes off the back of the underground. But so far perhaps the first significance of the underground, that meaningless vogue word, which like all vogue words has the effect of flattening and depressing and taking over its subject, is that it does represent a kind of return to the way things were in the Twenties, before film-making began to look so expensive and complicated. Not for forty years has it been possible to take film-making so for granted. Partly, of course, it is a matter of cheaper, more portable and more manageable equipment—particularly sound equipment. Partly, it has to do with the climate of a generation which accepts film as no one born before about 1940 could ever do.

London came late to it; a few years ago, overseas visitors, well-briefed on Shirley Clarke, the Mekas Brothers and Andy Warhol, had to be told that if they went looking for a London underground they would look in vain. But no longer: independent film-making is proliferating, and some of the inevitable tensions are already making themselves apparent. The problem for any film-maker, above or below ground, is less how to make a film than how to find somewhere or someone to show it. And if film-makers accept, as some seem to, or have to, that they are really making movies for their friends, home movies with the underground seal of approval, then the mumbling, hermetic, deliberately uncommunicative style becomes its own cult badge of honour. If you haven't a hope of reaching a wider audience, then there is little temptation to try; and if you communicate less and less, to fewer and fewer people, that's also your sign of how obtuse and limited and tied to restrictive systems is the world which still thinks cinema means *The Sound of Music*.

But if systems of distribution and exhibition are those which adjust most creakingly to change, they do in fact adjust. Arts labs, New Cinema Club, the Institute of Contemporary Arts film shows, the more establishment-oriented chain of Film Theatres . . . the late Sixties have only seen the beginning of all this, a parallel cinema alongside the Odeons. Conceivably, before the end of the 1970s, the relations between 'majority' and 'minority' could be in for something fairly drastic in the way of upheavals.

* * *

One demand brought up by the Etats Généraux of the French cinema, during their hopeful, argumentative summer of 1968, was for free cinema—literally free, in the sense that no one would pay for admission. It is hardly a demand likely to bring a gleam of recognition to the eye of any tax-payer; and as hopeless non-starters go, it probably comes high on the list. But the fact that this pie-in-the-sky fantasy could be sustained, enough to send some festivals scurrying after free film shows for workers and students if only as a placatory gesture to the forces of dissent, is itself evidence of a rather complex set of attitudes. I haven't seen anyone try to define them in print, and probably they are indefinable. But they seem to link up vague notions from Lenin ('for us, cinema' . . . etc.), and a kind of obeisance to the gods of McLuhan and mass communications, with a generalised sense of revolt divorced from economic reality. Television is by far the more powerful propaganda medium and, being on the whole government-controlled, perhaps finally more accessible to pressure than the cinema. But television seems to be accepted as public and official. The cinema—far more expensive, in many ways far more elusive—is regarded at once as the free and private art and the form for political dissent. One way to keep it that way, of course, is to go on charging for tickets: the emotive 'free' sounds much less attractive in its more accurate form, 'taxpayer-financed'.

The dilemma of the contemporary film-maker can no doubt be seen in its most extreme, most exacerbated, and if one wants to be brutal most ludicrous, form in the last two films of Jean-Luc Godard. Supporters have rallied loyally, even persuasively, to the cause of Godard's search for a new language—a tongue fit for permanent confrontation and contestation. But away from these apologies, the uneasy, painful impression of the actual films remains. Godard's



"LE GAI SAVOIR": JULIET BERTO, JEAN-PIERRE LEAUD

stretched and ultra-sensitive antennae have previously been able to pull impressions out of the air for us, to define what we were thinking before we knew we were thinking it—the flavour of conspiracy in *Made in USA*, the ultimate lethal traffic jam of *Weekend*. Now, they seem only to be picking up for him dead static. Anne Wiazemsky, in *One Plus One*, scribbling posters in the London streets with slogans, or the couple in *Le Gai Savoir* sitting arguing under their plastic umbrella—how beautifully boring they are, how mesmerised by the lulling monotones of contestation without resolution, how definably and inescapably of the late Sixties.

The problem for the would-be revolutionary film-maker is that the cinema of the private, questioning voice and the more or less esoteric expression cannot without convulsions reverse its direction to walk out shouting into the street. And the process of 'deculturalisation' (a word so hideous as to indicate its own brand of despair) is ultimately only another fantasy. We cannot 'go back to zero': we can only sit in a darkened television studio talking about it.

* * *

'All changed, changed utterly . . .' In many ways, of course not. The really big money-makers in the London cinema during the last few months have mostly been excursions in different forms of nostalgia—*The Battle of Britain*, *Oh! What a Lovely War*, *Oliver*, even *The Wild Bunch*. Is their success less significant, or actually of the same kind, as that of *Easy Rider* or *Midnight Cowboy*, films which sentimentalise a clouded innocence and look wanly at lost and hopeless dreams? In either case, it is again a retreat from reality; and perhaps the most striking impression of cinema now is the extent and pervasiveness of that retreat.

Whatever route films take in the 1970s, it must surely be one that leads away from fantasy—though not, it goes without saying, back to neo-realism, Italian style, hard-hitting exposé, American style, or poor cows in Battersea, British style. Or is an already apparent division to widen: television as the medium for our facts, and cinema for our dreams? If there is a central debate ahead for film criticism in its relation with film-makers, this, too, seems the direction it is probably going to have to argue. The indulgence of criticism in the 1960s has been the ease with which it has led itself down the alluring garden paths of the second-rate, admiring a director's consistency to himself and disregarding the larger consistencies. Now, perhaps, it really is coming up to closing time in the pleasure gardens of the West; time at least, for another, less clouded look at the perpetually shifting mirror images of the medium and the message.

Eric Rohmer:

"MA NUIT CHEZ MAUD": MARIE-CHRISTINE BARRAULT, TRINTIGNANT.



L'Amour Sage

Carlos Clarens

JUST AS THE NARRATOR is in pursuit of a woman who, momentarily, seems to elude him, events bring him in contact with another. And, regardless of the charm and persuasion of the second, he will reject her in favour of the first, even when he is not yet assured of her possession.' Thus, Eric Rohmer defines the recurrent theme of his filmed *contes moraux*. A simple statement but also a snare for professional film decoders, since the beguiling simplicity of the schema—in old Hollywood terms, boy meets and loses first girl, boy meets and refuses second girl, boy gets first girl—allows a series of permutations subject to social, intellectual, sentimental, even political variants; a rich gamut of affinity and contradiction, long the common currency of the novel but, so far, only summarily approached by the cinema.

Rohmer's aim is less to create a literary cinema than to enrich cinema with the techniques of literature, which accounts for the imprecise literary aura of his films. The most common literary analogies brought to mind by *La Collectionneuse* and *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*, at least in France, are Restif de la Bretonne and Choderlos de Laclos; actually, it is Proust who informs the former (specifically the Albertine/Marcel love/

contempt relationship), just as Balzac's influence hovers over *Maud*. Rohmer would never dream of adapting these, his favourite authors (ten years ago, he *did* write an adaptation of Dostoevsky's *A Gentle Creature* which never got produced, but a direct transposition from another medium now seems out of the question). Nor does Rohmer accept any influence other than the most unconscious, that is, the most deeply felt, from his film masters, Renoir and Hitchcock. When Rohmer seemed to study another film-maker, he was in reality studying himself. When he shoots, he is bringing to the screen literary works as yet *unwritten*, writing film prose much the same way that Pasolini films poetry. And he is a self-admitted classicist inasmuch as his films are a reflection on the world rather than on cinema itself.

He is also an author capable of straying from one appointed theme with rewarding results, and both his first feature, *Le Signe du Lion* (1959), and his sketch in *Paris Vu Par...* (1965) exist comfortably outside the series of *contes moraux*. Produced by Claude Chabrol after the success of *Les Cousins*, *Le Signe du Lion* was finished at a time when New Wave films were glutting the market and had to wait three years to be released.

It then flopped everywhere but in Africa where the title—which refers to Leo, the sign of the Zodiac that rules the midsummer—misled the public into believing they would see a jungle epic. Instead, they were faced with the tale of a Dutch violinist (played by American expatriate Jess Hahn) who, waiting for an inheritance, is forced to spend the summer in Paris. Left behind by friends and mistress, he soon runs out of funds, loses his lodgings and is finally reduced to living as a derelict on the banks of the Seine, eventually striking up a dubious friendship with a fellow *clochard*. Together they set up a pathetic little act which they perform outside the tourist traps of Saint Germain. There, during a drunken brawl, he is rediscovered by his two most devoted friends. Summer's over, he is now a rich man.

It is a picture that often brings Renoir to mind, and not only because Jean Le Poulain plays the hobo as a demonic relative of Boudou, or because Hahn has the sort of friendly bear-like nobility that is distinctly Renoiresque. One feels the spirit of comradeship in front as well as behind the camera: Stéphane Audran, Malka Ribowska, José Varéla and Godard play bit roles. But mostly the film captures the intense physicality of a time and a place: Paris in the month of August, deserted by the natives and overrun by the tourists; the cosmopolitan *anomie* of the Left Bank, the sudden gust of desolation as night falls; but also, a feeling for bonds made and broken over a bottle of cheap red wine on a sunny *quai*.

There is hardly any feeling of regression in the hero's shifting fortune. Instead, the film suggests that the man succumbs less to the force of circumstance than to the ever-present lure of Bohemianism that Paris traditionally represents to the outsider, so that Wesselrin's six weeks in hell become as well the last summer in every man's youth. In documenting the passage from artist to mountebank, Rohmer builds a limpidly linear film, the ends of the storyline stretching outside the running time of the picture, almost beyond the director's control. Again, as with Renoir, we have simply wandered into the characters' world, walked a short way together and taken our leave as they go on to live another moment of their lives.

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'We were not critics going on to become film-makers, we were film-makers who happened to write film criticism.' After the failure of *Le Signe du Lion*, Rohmer went back to his critic's desk at *Cahiers du Cinéma*, where he was already regarded as André Bazin's worthy successor (some would say rival). 'Bazin had ideas and the rest of us had tastes. All of Bazin's ideas are good, his tastes are debatable. His judgments have not been upheld by posterity, that is, he never succeeded in imposing a great film-maker. He liked some who were great, but I don't think that what he said helped to launch them. We, on the contrary, never said anything important about cinema theory, we simply developed Bazin's ideas. In return, I believe we discovered the right values, and those who came after us confirmed our choice. We imposed film-makers that have lasted, and, I believe, will last.'

The pieces he wrote for *Cahiers*—the earlier ones under his real name, Maurice Scherer—reveal both his preferences and preoccupations. Some of his criticism illumines its subject (as in his review of Welles' *Confidential Report* which he titled 'A Fable for the XX Century'), some is superior to the film reviewed (Mankiewicz's *The Quiet American* served as the basis for the perceptive 'Politics versus Fate'). The longest of these articles, 'Celluloid and Marble,' written in 1954, already questions the role of cinema among the arts and served, a dozen years later, as inspiration for a feature television film bearing the same title, wherein Rohmer asked musicians, architects and artists to compare the film to their respective disciplines.

In 1963, Rohmer was ousted as chief editor of *Cahiers* after a disagreement on the magazine's aesthetic policies. On the side of what the others termed 'the great naive cinema' (i.e. American), Rohmer was bound to appear somewhat reactionary in his stand against the isolation of the medium, his non-committal attitude to *cinéma-vérité* and his awareness of the parochialism of the New Wave which made dispassionate

judgment impossible (he praised Alain Jessua and Jacques Rozier, not the usual standard-bearers of the movement). Rohmer's departure was not all that amicable, although both parties still maintain a *cosa nostra* silence about it; it also signalled the magazine's drift to the Left that culminated in the extreme Left (Althusserian) stance of last October and the ensuing crisis.

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Fortunately, he had already found his ideal producer, Barbet Schroeder and the enterprising Films du Losange, and began filming the *contes moraux*, rather modestly, in 16 mm. In 1964, he entered French television. Just how much this discipline proved beneficial to his more personal work was made clear last summer when Henri Langlois ran a Cinémathèque tribute to the film-makers of the Télévision Scolaire. Rohmer's output included documentaries on subjects as varied as the Parsifal legend, the Industrial Revolution, girl students in Paris, Louis Lumière and (not surprisingly) Pascal. Thoroughly didactic, they never aspire to the personal statement, nor do they look down at their subject, becoming instead a learning process passed from subject to film-maker to viewer. 'I don't know much about linguistics but I will, as soon as I do a television film about it,' defines Rohmer's attitude to an activity he refuses to qualify as 'alimentary'. A painstakingly patient researcher, it took him a full year to complete *La Fermière de Montfaucon*: he was obviously exploring the medium along with the subject. Also, inevitably, he became his own cameraman on some of these shorts. Even now, after the success of *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*, he plans to pursue his television career and he will moonlight from this job to make the next two features. 'I can live without my films. I would like to become a sort of Sunday film-maker.'

Most of the subject matter in Rohmer's documentaries could be deemed unfilmable, poetry and literature being impossible to visualise. 'It repelled me and, at the same time, it interested me to render in visual terms something that was not at all visual. You had to violate cinema, even if films have an inborn aptitude for documentary. More remains to be done in the field of documentary and didactic films than in fiction cinema.' This private obsession with filming the unfilmable was carried over from television into the *contes*. 'I wanted to portray in film what seemed most alien to the medium, to express feelings buried deep in our consciousness. That's why they have to be told in the first person singular and why there has to be a commentary. The protagonist discusses himself and judges his actions. I film the process.'

"LE SIGNE DU LION": JESS HAHN.



It calls, naturally, for the simplest of storylines. On one hand, there is the notion of 'tale', on the other that of 'moral'; if one listens to Rohmer, any computer fed this data will come up with the plot: it will be a love story, in half-tint. He has written six such pictures and filmed four, not necessarily in the order in which they were written, and on film they seem to be getting progressively more complex. The theme appears simply stated in the first, *La Boulangère de Monceau* (1962): an idle young man whiles away an hour by seducing a young girl who works in a baker's shop. The situation is reversed in the second, *La Carrière de Suzanne* (1963): the boy finds the girl unattractive until he sees her with another boy. Already, moral implications start to appear.

The original plan called for the first three tales to be shot in black and white, the last three in colour. But, forced to wait for Jean-Louis Trintignant to become available for *La Fille à Bicyclette* (as *Ma Nuit Chez Maud* was originally called), it became possible for Rohmer to make a summer film in colour. This turned out to be *La Collectionneuse* (1967) which, were it not for the fact that it was written after *Maud*, could be considered the intermediate step between the simple two-character scheme of the first two *contes* and the elaborate four-character variation of the latter film. It represents, nevertheless, a reversal of Rohmer's usual method: the dialogue was culled and arranged from lengthy taped interviews with the three leading characters, who were placed in a Rohmerian situation. 'The most fascinating aspect of the three characters is their *argot de caste*. There were some allusions in Daniel's dialogue, for instance, that are still incomprehensible to me. It was indispensable for the picture that the actors collaborate in the *mise en scène*: I wanted very complex characters, not too black, not too white, impossible to define in a few words. Although they all belong more or less to the same generation, there are gaps of milieux, of sensibility. Each one had to have its own *vérité*.'

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The three characters of *La Collectionneuse* are introduced in brief prologues that sketch their background and sensibility. Haydée (Haydée Politoff) is seen in a bikini walking on a beach near St. Tropez. She stops, allowing the camera to isolate parts of her physique in what amounts to a purely anthropometric description. She remains silent and slightly cryptic, tipping us to the fact that she is an instinctual person rather than a 'moral' one. The second prologue introduces

"LA COLLECTIONNEUSE": PATRICK BAUCHAU, HAYDEE POLITOFF.



"MA NUIT CHEZ MAUD"

Daniel, a 'non-painter' (Daniel Pommereulle), through a discussion ('Painting exists to cut one's fingers') with art critic Alain Jouffroy. Mercurial and perverse, Daniel's personality is captured in his work: a small can of paint bristling with razor blades. Adrien (Patrick Bauchau), the narrator, is introduced in the third and last prologue, also the longest as befits his complexity. At least in his narrative function, he is the director's mouthpiece, a tortured aesthete, locked in perpetual argument with himself, who seems to step out from the pages of Saint-Simon. And, since it is through his words that the film is to be read, *La Collectionneuse* becomes the intimate journal of a modern dandy with the soul of a Jansenist, the dilemma of a man wary of instinctual commitment and action (even in love), the portrayal of an artificial sensibility caught between emotion felt and emotion *literalised*.

These three are thrown together for the summer in a decaying villa near St. Tropez. Few other characters intrude on their relationships and the town itself exists as a mere point of reference: it provides Haydée with the succession of faceless young men she 'collects' for her one-night affairs. Instead, we are entreated to observe the game of courtship at its subtlest, every shift of mood, every momentary truce recorded by Adrien (and therefore, by Rohmer) with the precision and fastidiousness of a cartographer up-dating the *Carte du Tendre*, that 17th-century landscape of sentiment. Haydée finally succeeds in adding Daniel to her collection, partly to enlist his support against the seemingly impregnable Adrien, partly because it's the one level where they can communicate. 'All I want is to have relations as normal as possible with people,' she says, rather touchingly, near the end of the picture. It's the one thing, of course, that she can never aspire to with Adrien. As the story comes to its close and Adrien is about to capitulate, one trivial delay proves long enough for him to reason himself out of the affair. By now, we know he could never justify Haydée to himself.

Adrien's flight from Haydée—or the hero's rejection of Maud in the next film—is not to be interpreted, as Rohmer's more virulent detractors have done, as a refusal of passion or an apology for impotence and non-action. In reality, it is the refusal of love as imposed by a time and place: summer and the isolation of the villa in *La Collectionneuse*, winter and provincial life in *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*. Other than sacrificing passion to principle, Adrien is also renouncing 'love from idleness' (*l'amour par désœuvrement* mentioned in the dialogue of *Maud* and often heard in conversation with the director) for 'love from conviction', which brings Rohmer to the core of his theme, the problem of choice.

'A choice can be heartbreaking,' says Françoise, the pretty, vulnerable blonde of *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*, who has renounced her married lover out of her Catholic principles. Adrien's choice in the previous film is not a heartbreaking one: it's a question of aesthetics, there is no ideology involved. But all four characters in *Maud* come fully equipped with religious/

ideological principles. (Even Maud, a freethinker in a family of masonic aristocracy, wears her irreligiosity like a veil.) That's why the previous film lacks the gravity of the latter; why *Maud* had to be in black and white; why the characters, and not only the hero/narrator, have to bare their feelings one to another.

As usual in a Rohmer film, the opinions expressed by the characters engage the characters and them alone: Vidal, the Marxist philosopher, is as persuasive and sincere as Jean-Louis, the Catholic engineer, and they're both well supported by Pascalian quotes. Their articulateness reduces narration to a minimum. There are only two short bursts of commentary: the first to inform us that Jean-Louis feels predestined to marry Françoise, after seeing her in church for the first time; the second to give the story a mildly ironical twist wherein choice and predestination appear as the two faces of the same metaphysical coin. Between these two well-spaced moments of self-revelation, the hero spends two chaste nights with the two very dissimilar ladies, spurns Maud for Françoise, and ends up married to a girl who has also exercised her choice, a heartbreaking one. As every choice carries an implicit loss, Maud is made to appear the superior woman: she's generous, witty, passionate and, played by Françoise Fabian, her erotic glow seems to light up Clermont-Ferrand in the dark of winter. She is not, however, a woman to be confined by the hero's moral limits. She loves well but not too wisely, and the epilogue finds her at sentimental loose ends once again.

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Rohmer plans to start the shooting of *Le Genou de Claire* next summer, in colour. He has temporarily settled down in Annecy, where the fifth moral tale takes place. It's another simple story, as simple as, let's say, *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*. 'It will concern a man in his early thirties, to be played by Jean-Claude Brialy, who returns to his home town to sell the family property. He meets and becomes sentimentally involved with three women: a woman in her

forties and her two daughters. It will not be as serious as *Maud*, nor as pseudo-erotic as *La Collectionneuse*. Instead, it should be both sunny and reflective.'

He also envisages another film, to be done perhaps before the sixth and last *conte moral* goes before the cameras some time the year after (it already exists in Rohmer's mind and it's titled, albeit temporarily, *L'Amour, l'Après-midi*). This interpolation would be in the same vein as *Place de l'Etoile*, Rohmer's contribution to the episodic *Paris Vu Par...* This obsessive little film succeeded in showing how a location can impose a certain moral on the characters: a stuffy clerk, believing he has accidentally killed a drunk, is forced to change his familiar route in order to avoid the scene of his 'crime'. There is, first, the description of the place and the narration is subordinate to it; it will exist only in function of the place.

In his days at the *Cahiers*, Rohmer used to compare Hitchcock and Buñuel to the opposite poles of the Right-Left film axis. Now, after the unexpected success (critical acclaim and 250,000 tickets sold on its first release) of *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*, he looms as France's great *cinéaste* from the Right (rather than of the Right). And yet, his films seem to bring him closer to Buñuel on the Left than to Hitchcock on the Right (or, for that matter, Bresson, with whom he is often compared). Although it is obvious that when Buñuel and Rohmer talk of religion, they have different concepts in mind, it is also obvious that their styles share the same clean *écriture*, the same contempt for the recondite meaning, even the same distrust for background music. Only the most thin-skinned Catholic could be offended by the heretical outbursts of *La Voie Lactée*. There is, this time, more sorrow than anger in Buñuel's progress from Revelation to cliché, from dogma to schoolgirls chanting their catechism. Rohmer, the wise, takes the opposite tack, reaching back to the very source of moral conviction; in his own measured, convincing manner, he talks to us about the joy and sorrow, the heartbreak and the triumph of *l'amour sage*.

"MA NUIT CHEZ MAUD": ANTOINE VITEZ, FRANCOISE FABIAN, JEAN-LOUIS TRINTIGNANT.





Festivals 69

LONDON



SAME PATTERN AS previously for the 13th London Festival, with a minor variation: the number of Festival Choices (films, that is, not previously shown at other festivals during the year) is appreciably higher than usual. Partly this may be the luck of London's timing, in being able to draw on the new late-autumn film crop; partly perhaps a reflection on the year's general festival standard (Berlin and Moscow, especially, were widely held to be distinctly non-vintage). We publish here reviews of all the new films, whether London choices or those which earlier slipped through our festival correspondents' net, with references to films already reported on from elsewhere. We will be returning at greater length to many of them when they are commercially shown here.

Contributors to this Festival feature are Jan Dawson, Penelope Houston, Philip Strick, John Russell Taylor and David Wilson.

Boy

NAGISA OSHIMA

See Venice Festival report, Autumn 1969 issue.

The Confrontation

MIKLOS JANCSCO

Cannes report, Summer 1969.

Death by Hanging

NAGISA OSHIMA

'Are you for or against the abolition of the death penalty?' demands the opening title, and the scene is set for an objective description of the entire ritual of execution, the camera tracking slowly through the empty cells until, suddenly, there are people in uniform, a trembling blindfolded figure, a noose, and a trapdoor that flies open. From then on, nothing is normal. The condemned man somehow remains alive, but his memory has gone; officially dead, tantalisingly restored to consciousness, he has to be persuaded all over again both that he has committed crimes and that he deserves to die for them.

Oshima demolishes the case for capital punishment in a unique mixture of comedy, fantasy and pathos—or to be strictly accurate, he establishes that sex murders, at least, need some other form of retribution. As the prison officers reconstruct from the trial records the prisoner's home life, and essential details of his attacks on two girls, it becomes apparent that their imaginations are as fertile and overheated as his own; eventually they take him to the scenes of his crimes and attempt, in desperate answer to his innocent questions ('What is rape?'), to persuade him to re-enact them. The young man stands by impassively as his chief interrogator apparently commits a further murder, and from then on collective guilt convulses the entire group with the benevolent exception of the Public Prosecutor (who reserves the right to have no opinions whatever until the moment of final judgment).

Only in the course of an intimate conversation with his own sister, lying on the floor while the officers dispute drunkenly around them, does the prisoner unravel the probable motivation of the killer he once was—but by this time so all-embracing is the confusion that the 'flashbacks' to one of the crimes have an idyllic contentment rather than any kind of horror. When the trapdoor drops again, the noose hangs empty, the bedlam visions are gone, we are all politely thanked for our attention. Oshima's lesson in the apportionment of blame returns to documentary detachment. Rightly enough, it's a film that leaves his

audience swinging in mid-air; and despite the occasional over-emphases and obscurities, Oshima writes his material with an urgency that grips one by the throat.—P. S.

The Deserter and the Nomads

JURO JAKUBISKO

Venice report, Autumn 1968 (*The Deserter*), and Cannes, Summer 1969.

Destroy, She Says

MARGUERITE DURAS

Like *scènes à faire* that should absolutely not be *faites*, there are inescapable questions which just should not be asked. With *Détruire, Dit-Elle*, the fatal question is 'What's it all about?' It is reasonably easy to say what happens, up to a certain point. Two men get into conversation at a strange hotel-cum-convalescent home, and are then joined by the wife of one of them. These three, linked in a mysterious complicity, move in on a slightly older woman, staying alone, and try in various ways to draw her into their group. She is torn between attraction and fear, and finally, though not without some difficulty, makes her escape with her matter-of-fact husband. But it seems that neither of them has heard the last of the trio. In an extraordinary final scene the three, left behind, plan a little visit, and listen to sounds and music, signalling the approach of some great, but welcome, perhaps even necessary, destructive force through the surrounding forest. Legitimate, obviously, to wonder who or what they are, what, if anything, they represent, what the forest, the famous view no one can ever find, the sounds in the final sequence, may signify. But fatal to expect any clear, unequivocal answer, and to make 'understanding' on this level a condition of accepting the film. It works—and powerfully, hauntingly—in quite another way: as a series of obscure rituals played out with the greatest seriousness by people who perhaps themselves do not even half grasp their significance, like the rather funny, rather sinister card game with no rules in which the three engage their victim (patient? initiate?). Very severely made, mostly in long-held, almost static

"DEATH BY HANGING".



"DESTROY, SHE SAYS": CATHERINE SELLERS.

shots, and impeccably acted, the film transfers to the screen with uncanny precision the special world of Marguerite Duras the writer: as in her novels, the outer form may be prose, but the inner life is pure poetry. —J. R. T.

Double Suicide

MASAHIRO SHINODA

Venice report, Autumn 1969.

Duet for Cannibals

SUSAN SONTAG

Cannes report, Summer 1969.

The Event

VATROSLAV MIMICA

The story, from Chekhov, begins with an air of utter simplicity: a boy and his grandfather leave their farm to sell a horse at the local market. The air is a mist of snowflakes, wolves mutter and howl in the forest. And gradually, as in *Kaya*, the atmosphere of cold menace builds into a crescendo of explosions, each more terrible than the last, as one crime leads inevitably to the next. Within the formal structure of the narrative, Mimica creates on the one hand a precisely textured setting of almost tangible documentary detail—dripping trees, icy mud, the paraphernalia of the market, the contemplative peace of the ferry—and on the other, an environment of unpredictable incongruities: a huge umbrella, a transistor radio (rather too prone to producing Beethoven at moments of crisis), or a pause for cigarettes all round during a struggle to the death. The camerawork by Frano Vodopivec is possibly a touch too mobile, resorting to semi-revolve tracking shots where a head-on stare would often do as well, while the character of the small girl is not perhaps established likeably enough for us to feel sufficient loss at her demise. These are minor points of departure, however, from Mimica's generally immaculate

ABOVE: DELON IN "LE SAMOURAI". FAR LEFT: LIDIA FUORTES IN "ONE FINE DAY". LEFT: DOMINIQUE SANDA, GUY FRANGIN IN "A GENTLE CREATURE".

achievement—the best contemplation of elemental savagery since *The Virgin Spring*. As in Bergman's film, a superstitious fatalism underlies the tale, while the limitless forest in which it's set silently enfolds the petty fates of men as if they had never been. When the old man (beautifully played by Pavle Vujisic) finally succumbs to his attackers, it is, quite rightly, as if a tree had been felled.—P. S.

Events

JOHN LLEWELLYN

Though unashamedly a homage to Godard, and with some appallingly long and static takes, unevenly improvised dialogue, rough editing and crudely applied sound, John Llewellyn's first, very independent feature ultimately makes its point with considerable force, showing up the component parts of a 'society that is ignorant, stupid and anti-life' through the dilemma of its hero. A black man in London, he attempts to live outside society or at least on its fringes, and to channel his anger at Vietnam, racialism, the Arab-Israeli war and the class struggle into some useful revolutionary activity, but is consistently diverted by pretty bourgeois girls, stereo equipment, cars, record shops and the fact that words come easier than action. Despite the technical crudities, the film presents a remarkably authentic picture of London's drop-out sub-culture (its style even reinforcing its subject matter) and the mixture of casual sex, pot smoking, pop music and politics is unstrained and entirely convincing. The final shoot-up in a wrecking yard may belong to the realm of fantasy, but the paranoia that inspires it is shown to be more than legitimate.—J. D.

A Gentle Creature

ROBERT BRESSON

Bresson's work is in many ways curiously paradoxical, and none of his films puts the paradoxes in greater relief than this. Meticulously prepared, calculated down to the last detail as they are, one would imagine that they left almost nothing to chance, least of all their effect on audiences—and yet, no one's cinema is more delicately poised between triumph and disaster, total devotion and total rejection, than Bresson's, more liable to radical effects from almost imperceptible causes. No film-maker depends less on 'acting' than Bresson, whose method of work precludes his performers almost entirely from performing in any recognisable fashion—and yet using people in this way as objects, Bresson is more dependent than any other film-maker on exactly right casting. If his actors have to do nothing, but just to be, it is vital that they be the right things, that they give off exactly the right vibrations in front of the camera.

Therefore, when I say that for me *Une Femme Douce* is an almost total failure, I am not necessarily denying that it comes within a hair's breadth of being a towering masterpiece: with Bresson, that's all the difference there is. Certainly, from the first shot the film could not be the work of anyone else. The door handle, shot from slightly above, the hand on it, the indistinctly identified lower half of a person moving into the room: at once the tone of the discourse is set, we know precisely whose world we are entering. And once in it we stay there, hypnotised in spite of ourselves, as the husband of the girl who has just killed

herself, formally, dispassionately unrolls the strange story of their meeting, marriage and disagreements. It would be easy to tot up on paper the characteristic distinctions of the film, to demonstrate that Bresson is using familiar techniques to slightly new ends. The dislocation of the central characters from their precise setting in time and space which we recognise in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* recurs here, for instance, as husband and wife move like beings from another world (the 19th-century Russia of Dostoevsky, perhaps?) through a familiar Paris of 1969, neither belonging to it nor noticeably ill at ease in it.

But in the end the success of the film depends on it establishing some sort of mysterious internal intensity, a feeling that, whether we quite understand what is going on between husband and wife ourselves, something evidently is. (I shall ignore as Jesuitical the argument that the essence of Bresson's art here lies in his steadfast refusal to imbue his characters with life, to let them in any way involve us, so that in effect the more bored we are, the more successful he is in carrying out his intentions.) While admiring almost everything there is to be admired in the film—starting with the exquisite colour photography—I find that it does not actually reach me at any point; I am so aware of the emotional vacuum in which everything happens that it becomes oppressive. And the reason for this seems to me the casting. Neither husband nor wife conveys any suggestion that they have emotions, reactions, thoughts even; that they are anything but objects, as passive as chairs or hat-stands. She is supposed, by her husband at least, to be 'douce', but just looks vaguely grumpy. He is supposed, by himself at least, to be violently jealous and passionate under his quiet, conventional surface, but he radiates nothing at all. And so the film, for me, remains beautiful, exquisitely worked, and meaningless. Like *Pickpocket*, unlike those peerless masterpieces *Au hasard*, *Balthazar* and *Mouchette*. But then, if you admire *Pickpocket*. . . —J. R. T.

Horoscope

BORO DRASKOVIC

In style and subject, Draskovic's first feature indicates that the impoverished beach towns of Fellini's *Vitelloni* still have

their counterparts just across the water. The remote Yugoslav station where he sets his study of boredom and frustration isn't entirely unaffected by the reconstruction programme of an enlightened socialist régime, but signs of the régime's existence are more apt to provoke despair than optimism. The Balkan Express, one link with any metropolis, is expensive to ride, its passengers offering tantalising glimpses of more affluent modes of being; the pretty city girl selling magazines to the passengers, protected by the glass walls of her newly constructed kiosk, is at once desirable and inaccessible.

Human nature lags behind railways and revolution. The stationmaster fences for one of a quintet of layabouts who rifles his father's home to obtain money, the only substantial fodder for the youths' dreams of exotic living in faraway places, as they obsessively hum 'The Ballad of Bonnie and Clyde', covetously eye the University sweat-shirt of a passenger from Kansas. Cycling interminably over bleached-out cliffs or swimming in waveless water, they dream of the city girl whom one of them idly boasts he will seduce in seven days. But while he circles (literally and figuratively) round her, she succumbs to a visiting Swedish engineer, then is raped by the boys outraged at her preference for a foreigner. Only one boy leaves by the train, critically wounded after a senseless knife fight; another is shot reluctantly by an ambiguously friendly policeman. For the rest, life as before, empty horizons, physical and metaphorical.

As social realism the film is masterly in describing the indolent rituals of boredom, inarticulacy, adolescent frustration. Only when Draskovic indulges a more symbolic vein (engines panting as rape begins, whistle screeching at climax) is his schematism apparent and our disbelief reawakened.—J. D.

Je t'aime, je t'aime

ALAIN RESNAIS

Inexplicable that this dazzling film, now more than eighteen months old, has yet to achieve a commercial showing here. Its pretext is a science fiction experiment (like Chris Marker's in *La Jetée*) to send a man back into his past; its theme, as always with Resnais, is the subtler processes of memory. Claude Ridder has tried to shoot himself;

"JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME".





"THE JOKE".

he's picked up from hospital by two strangers, taken on a mysterious, magically filmed car ride to a clinical centre, and prepared for the experiment in which he's shut into a kind of giant brain (or conceivably, fairytale pumpkin), and sent back to relive one moment in time. The experimenters lose him; Ridder re-experiences, in fragments, his life and loves—the doomed relationship with Catrine, mysteriously dead in a shabby hotel in Glasgow (a place for a Resnais heroine to die), which has wrecked his life.

The whole film is constructed as a brilliant, convoluted interplay between time planes: our time (the ninety minutes the film takes), the time of the experiment, and the beautiful, threatening and increasingly despairing memories in which Ridder finds and loses himself. One has never been more aware of Resnais exploring time through timing: matchless editing, an unfailing instinct for the duration of a shot. The start of the experiment—Ridder swimming underwater, in an element at once alien and free, and surfacing to a lazy question from the girl—is a moment of perfection; in his brain-pumpkin, Ridder recaptures it like a lost, half-focused dream. Later he shies from inescapable recollections, shades them with nightmare, perhaps lies about them to himself. At the end, there's only despair and the bullet; and a last shot, inexpressibly sad and strange, of the laboratory mouse who has gone into its own (or Ridder's) past, standing under a little glass dome, nose pressed to a breathing-hole, paws hopelessly outstretched. An extraordinary shot, and an extraordinary film: not the minor work some critics had led one to expect, but hardly less central a staging post than *Marienbad* in Resnais' travels with time.—P. H.

The Joke

JAROMIL JIRES

Slight but fresh and pleasing treatment of a theme which has become reasonably familiar in East European cinema during the last few years: the confrontation of the bliss-was-it-in-that-dawn-to-be-alive beginnings of communist rule with the staid, quieter, perhaps sadder and certainly more complex attitudes of today. This time the connection is made via a revenge plan that

misfires. A man who was disgraced (rather seriously and painfully) in student days because of a certain frivolity he manifested towards the great revolution, thinks he sees a chance to get his own back on his chief judge by now, years after the event, seducing his wife. But it doesn't work like that. Standards and people have changed meanwhile, and the husband doesn't care one way or another: he has his dolly mistress, his wife has her doggy young devotee, and no one is really shattered by the confected drama. True, the wife, when she finds out her new lover's real motives, gulps down a bottleful of pills, but they turn out to be merely laxatives, so the gesture loses a lot of its dramatic effect. Jires directs with his usual charm and keen eye for quirks of human behaviour; he manages to tell us something quite important, and quite serious, about twenty years of life without ever straining, or straining his characters, to do so. And he is often very funny in the process.—J. R. T.

Kes

KEN LOACH

Reviewed in our Autumn 1969 issue.

The Lady from Constantinople

JUDIT ELEK

Cannes report, Summer 1969.

Lions Love

AGNES VARDA

As different from *Les Créatures* as that was different from *Le Bonheur* as that was different from *Cléo de 5 à 7*. With each feature Agnès Varda seems to find a new subject, and with it a new style. This time it is, of all things, drop-out society in Hollywood. Of course, it is drop-out society with a difference: money. The *ménage à trois* formed in the film by Viva, Andy Warhol super-star, and Jerome Ragni and James Rado, authors of *Hair*, derive the ease and relaxation which constitute their chief charm largely from being rich enough to have no material worries, to live in (untidy) luxury, and to have apparently limitless time to play games, weave fantasies, explore themselves and each other. Much of the film's attractiveness is bound up in the personalities of these three, their genuine gaiety and freedom, which are proof even against such outside dramas as the assassination of Robert Kennedy and the shooting of Warhol.

Impinging on their lives in these few days of June 1968 is a slight fictional story about an independent New York film-maker called Shirley Clarke (played, most of the time, by Shirley Clarke) who stays with them while involved in setting up a low-budget 'underground' film about Hollywood. The difficulties of it all—sketched in a couple of riotous and no doubt all too accurate scenes of financial jiggery-pokery—drive 'Shirley' to attempt suicide, at which Shirley Clarke withdraws from the role insisting that she would never do such a thing just over some lousy film; Agnès Varda steps in for her; Shirley Clarke returns, contrite, to play the scene. The film probably never does get made, and the last we see of the threesome they are busy staging an aquatic burlesque of *The Beard* for turned-on pre-teens. Very strange, and to some extremely irritating, but a real treat for those ready confidingly to take the trip.—J. R. T.

Mandabi

OUSMANE SEMBENE

Some ten minutes' worth of attractive documentary about the unexpected contrasts of life in present-day Senegal are buried in this cumbersome comedy. Otherwise it has the built-in problem of a subject which tends to be tiresome even when superlatively done (a man receives a money order and has endless troubles with red tape before he can cash it) and is here done in slow motion, with some decidedly awkward acting to throw it further off. For devotees of emergent cinema only.—J. R. T.

My Night with Maud

ERIC ROHMER

Cannes report, Summer 1969, and article on Eric Rohmer in this issue.

A Nest of Gentlefolk

A. M-KONCHALOVSKY

Moscow report, Autumn 1969.

One Fine Day

ERMANNOLMI

Whether by intention or no, this is recognisably the third part of Olmi's trilogy of business life; the boy who hesitantly found for himself an office and a desk in *Il Posto*, and improved his qualifications and contrived a kind of equilibrium in his love-life in *I Fidanzati*, is now a grizzled 50-year-old poised to take over the top job in his firm. With dizzying speed, Olmi sketches in the thicket of negotiations and responsibilities through which the executive briskly makes his way: endless arguments over a suitable campaign for a deodorant, market research, juggling of departmental interests. The man has a country retreat, of course, and he scandalously neglects his wife, and each business trip is accompanied by some little affair or other. And at the moment that he contemplates gloatingly the next step forward, his car is lightly bumped, a man dies, and the callous armour of his self-sufficiency begins to fall apart.



"PIERRE AND PAUL".

Olmi has always had a keen eye for the acres of embarrassment that can lie between conflicting human interests, and his subtle portrait of the disoriented business shark being hustled from hospital to police to lawyers' offices is superbly compiled. Detached from his own domain of power, the executive is at the mercy of the laws of others—a doorman who has to lock up and go home, the police who have to impound his car, the small-time advocate who has been put on the case by his superior to see how he makes out. That the end result is domestic reconciliation is little enough surprise; generations of Hollywood businessmen have trodden the same stony path. But *One Fine Day* has a rich store of com-

pensations, not the least being that Olmi has returned to top form after the disappointment of *A Man Called John* and is beginning to fulfil all the promise of his technique in *I Fidanzati*. With his cast of tailor-made unknowns, and the totally responsive photography by Lamberto Caimi, Olmi cuts almost subliminally between the key moments of his character's downfall so that the present and the recollected past intermingle with Resnais-like complexity.—P. S.

Pierre and Paul

RENE ALLIO

Allio's third feature affirms his strength in revealing the general in the particular. His hero Pierre (played with admirably slobbish energy by Pierre Mondy) is both prototype consumer (living on credit to keep self and pert girl-friend in the style to which advertisements have accustomed them) and idiosyncratic individual, nostalgically attached to his mother, lazy about his reading, a free-thinker where marriage is concerned. He believes all Western propaganda; sees the construction firm where he works as a benevolent family, dislikes the Unions for undercutting profits. With equal pride of possession he caresses the wheel of a new car and the body of his 'fiancée'. With a child's faith in progress, he believes gadgetry and obsolescence the staples of the universe.

Simultaneously, his father Paul's death and the promotion of an ambitious engineer to 'assist' him shatter his complacency, provoke thoughts on immortality, continuity. His quest to understand Paul's life, now obsolete as last year's hit tunes, becomes a quest for himself. His credit runs out, his boss thinks of replacing him; he hears the words of the TV news he has watched sightlessly for so long (the time is May '68), simplistically identifies with America's rioting negroes, and takes pot shots at the crowds from his penthouse balcony before begging society (here the works' doctor) to help him readjust to its standards.



"LA TRÊVE".

A delicate equilibrium between comic and tragic, political and private elements maintains the film between thesis about a new exploited class (junior executive slaves to a system they believe harnessed in their service) and tragedy about the fall of an amiable buffoon. The allegory grows from the real, from precisely observed mannerisms, above all from the objects with which people surround and express themselves. The film may deal indirectly with the politicisation of certain cadres that May; certainly the alienation it observes is that of a class and not just an engagingly stupid individual. But Allio describes rather than



"UN SOIR, UN TRAIN": ANOUK AIMEE.

preaches, and the whole film (an overall pattern of tragedy) is greater than the sum of the comic episodes that form its parts.—J. D.

Pigsty

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

Venice report, Autumn 1969.

Prologue

ROBIN SPRY

Venice report, Autumn 1969.

Le Samourai

JEAN-PIERRE MELVILLE

Stripping the American gangster film to its purest structures and treating these with an essentially Japanese formalism, Melville choreographs the inexorable rituals of murder and intrigue through which his Parisian samurai must pass to mastermind his own murder and achieve a death consistent with his life. The only allegiance of his hired killer, Jeff Costello, is to the perfect professionalism which he affirms with every ritualised gesture and which rigorously defines his minimal relationships with other people. The quintessential gangster, but without a gang, his isolation is as complete in the shadowy underworld (seedy hotel poker games, chrome and mirror night-clubs) as in the harsh-lit metallic corridors of the police HQ or the surrealistically deserted Paris through which he moves towards his destiny: the Metro where the breathtaking penultimate chase occurs is an echoing labyrinth peopled only by adversaries.

Costello works for money but never spends; his possessions are his uniform (felt hat, trench-coat, white gloves) and the gigantic ring of skeleton keys that glistens like a steel crown. The only inessential in his room is a canary in a silver cage, singing out its one true note as it beats its feathers against the bars; otherwise the room is bare, drained of all colour save a lifeless, cracking grey; half mausoleum (the opening shot has Costello laid out like a corpse on the bed), half shrine to a criminal life style which though immortalised on celluloid has since been degraded or made obsolete by the larger bureaucratic organisations for crime and its mirror image, detection.

With only his gun and his silent cunning, the samurai pits himself against these twin organisations. Visiting the scene of the crime, he seems drawn to the trap his betrayers and the police have set for him. Yet the evidence of the empty gun with which he threatens the negress who has become his nemesis asserts his final victory: stage-managing his own death. The interweaving of ritualised Japanese and American themes,

the formalised colour and camerawork that create a world at once fantastic, allusive and coherent, mark out *Le Samourai* as both a Melville film and the Melville film to date.—J. D.

Un Soir... Un Train

ANDRE DELVAUX

As with *Man Who Had His Hair Cut Short*, Delvaux's film is about death in several forms—the living decay of old age, the expiry of a love-affair, the dramatic personification of the concept of death, and ultimately its physical presence in the form of a corpse. An honourable enough subject, painstakingly worked out with due reference to Everyman and to the eighteenth-century notion of love as *la petite mort*. Such is Delvaux's ability to tantalise with suspensefully edgy sequences, that it's not much before halfway through that one realises all the window-dressing is merely a front to a store of notions that will remain unexplored. The pleasure from then on becomes confined to a certain admiration for the efficient way in which Delvaux puts his scenes together and exploits to the full the rich colour photography of Ghislain Cloquet. There are, too, some extraordinary set-pieces: the silent wilderness of mud and snow where the three pilgrims get down from their train, the tiny provincial cinema where everyone gazes entranced at a deafening film about sky-diving (a not inappropriate metaphor, one subsequently reflects, for the instant of collision in a train crash), and the unnerving restaurant where, with echoes of Cocteau, an obsessive and fatal dance slowly reaches fever pitch. If nothing is quite as good as Yves Montand's three scenes of growing disquiet—with his mother, at the lecture-hall, and best of all at the dinner-table with a frosty Anouk Aimée—the visual inventiveness of *Un Soir... Un Train* gives it enough impetus for one to stay with it to the end of the journey. Pity, though, it was finally a branch-line.—P. S.

Sweet Hunters

RUY GUERRA

Venice report, Autumn 1969.

La Trêve

CLAUDE GUILLEMOT

Dryly amusing *divertissement* about the misadventures of two immaculately turned out Parisian wide boys who set off, independently, for a weekend in the country which turns out to be anything but peaceful as, aided and abetted by respective girl friends, they stalk each other like cat and mouse and are themselves stalked by a splendidly incompetent trio of junior league hoodlums convinced that there's something big in the offing. Wittily directed by Claude Guillemot (first film) like a game of poker in which the audience, knowing the cards, can anticipate each player's bluff yet still be surprised by the occasional ace up the sleeve. Best hands include the gangsters' unconventional but devastatingly effective approach to fishing (electrocution and hand grenades), the hilariously deadpan manoeuvres over a lunch table when each knows the other is up to something but neither is going to admit that he knows, and the Milos Forman-like interlude in a local dance hall when the game temporarily involves some startled outsiders. Superb, unruffled performances by Daniel Gélin and Charles Denner, supercilious and crestfallen by turn, in a perfectly modulated *rondo capriccioso*.

—D. W.

IN THE PICTURE

Australian Blues

'AUSTRALIA,' someone said, 'is the country without a face,' and part of the reason for this is its lack of a film industry of its own. In an attempt to fill the void, a number of local companies have been striving in the last few years to create co-productions with British or American interests, but few of these have attracted much notice abroad.

The most ambitious recent film to be made here is Tony Richardson's *Ned Kelly*, based on the career of the nineteenth-century bandit, Australia's one historical figure likely to mean anything on an English marquee. Gerry Fisher, the cameraman, Jocelyn Herbert, the art director, and Richardson have striven to create a look of yellowing period photographs, giving the people of the Australian countryside the bare, dignified, unselfconscious look of faces in old albums. Fisher has employed lenses not in use since the silent period. Actors have played without make-up (except beards) and Richardson has welcomed the rugged conditions of shooting on the stark terrain of Bungendore and other drab and rickety New South Wales equivalents of Tombstone, Arizona.

Not long before Richardson's winter 1969 shooting (winter, that is, in southern hemisphere terms), Philip Leacock, once felt to be a white hope of post-war British films and for years buried in television, returned to make what he hopes will be a comeback to the simple realism with which he first made his reputation. *Return of the Boomerang*, made by Warner/7 Arts on location several miles south of Sydney on the Shoalhaven River, is the 1840's story of an American convict (Beau Bridges) who obtains an amnesty by marrying a girl in a Sydney prison factory (Jane Merrow). The photography is by William (The Rain People) Butler, and the art director, Dennis Gentle, convincingly recreated an early nineteenth-century town, interiors and exteriors. Both this and Tony Richardson's film have fashionably eschewed all sets.

NLT Productions, a Sydney company acting in association with Westinghouse, has made *Squeeze a Flower, Squeeze a Grape*, directed by an American (Marc Daniels, a TV director handling his first feature) and starring Walter Chiari and Jack Albertson. Chiari plays an Italian priest, guardian of the secret of a rare liqueur, who comes to Australia in plain clothes and clashes with a business syndicate. A light comedy, it is to be followed by *Wake in Fright* as the

second NLT/Westinghouse venture, a story about a schoolteacher who undergoes nightmarish experiences in a brutal mining town. Richard Wilson was announced as director, but later withdrew, and Ted Kotcheff is to make the film, from a script by Evan Jones originally written for Joseph Losey and Dirk Bogarde, who had planned this venture to follow *Modesty Blaise*.

Michael Powell, as determinedly eclectic as ever, has made two features: *They're a Weird Mob*, a raw comedy which won an ignominious III rating in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, and *Age of Consent*, with James Mason, a story about a painter discovering a new source of inspiration in the life of the Great Barrier Reef. This is a more personal work, with echoes of his earlier island films, *Edge of the World* and *I Know Where I'm Going*. A small company called Goldsworthy Productions has made in collaboration with Hollywood's Harold Goldman Associates a group of low budget, postponed-sale-to-television films, including *It Takes All Kinds*, a thriller with Vera Miles, and *Colour Me Dead*, a remake of Maté's *D.O.A.*, with Tom Tryon in the Edmond O'Brien role.

The Sydney underground has got off to a haphazard but engagingly determined start in the work of Ubu Films, taking their name from Jerry and their inspiration largely from New York. Doyen of the new free Australian cinema is the iconoclastic Albie Thoms, a satirist with flair who has not yet settled into a strongly individualist mould. Ubu has had a rocky financial passage, and new legislation, calling for internal censorship in New South Wales and coming with unpleasing irony on the heels of a newly announced government experimental film fund, certainly threatens its far-out, cellar based existence. Ubu also exists as a distribution organisation, receiving parcels of film daily from places as unlikely as Perth, Western Australia, where in the most isolated Anglo-Saxon city in the world a hopeful underground struggles gamely to be heard.

Australia, despite these developments, is still a long way from having what it really

wants: feature films of its own, made entirely with local capital. The four studios now active are bogged down in television commercials and shorts, and the Commonwealth Film Unit is limited by the emasculating effect of a thin-blooded Department of the Interior to producing nothing but pretty travelogue bromides, devoid of the impact of the best Canadian documentaries. Recently, the situation at the CFU has reached crisis point, with several new documentary scripts shelved because they highlighted Australian problems. This situation—and the virtual reduction of ABC (equivalent of BBC) documentary to a sun-light-and-gum-trees inanity, with a recent satire on government leaders quickly scotched—has augured ill for any government sponsored film industry just at the moment when the government has been prodded into taking tardy action in the matter.

It is impossible to be wholly sanguine about the present plan to set up a federally run film and television development corporation on recommendations made by the Australian Council for the Arts. The Prime Minister, Mr. Gorton, has announced that loans will be made to film-makers, and has supplied a niggardly original million dollars for the basic opening fund. The corporation will act as a bank and commercial marketing agency, with offices overseas. The sum of 100,000 dollars has been set aside to finance a council which will plan a film school. There is hope after five years of supporting five to eight features a year. But many Australians wonder if the money will be made over only to those capable of producing glossily false pictures of their country. Here is a case for the government to answer. Can it relax censorship laws to permit the export of 'difficult' material and the showing of antipodean Andy Warhols locally? Or are we going to have a Commonwealth Film Unit situation writ large?

But apart from government indifference (or fear: Australian politicians dread criticism by the media, and Australia is a country where the public's 'innocence' is preserved in a kind of giant glass incubator)

MICK JAGGER AND CONFEDERATES IN TONY RICHARDSON'S "NED KELLY".



the lack of a virile local industry is due to a failure of energy on the part of filmmakers themselves. Australians are a people only half at ease with their environment, still looking nervously—or, if they are intellectuals, bitterly—back at the centres of civilisation from their sunlit suburbia in the South Pacific with a dustbowl at its heart.

Ideas are discussed, cohesive plans are prepared, then the indolence-inducing climate and comforts take over, and vigorous plans founder in sun and beer and sand. Hard, too, to find subjects based on conflict or tension in a country of mild, homogeneous, holiday-minded overall lethargy; though it is a tragedy that the beauty of the country and the people has so far largely escaped the camera, and the peculiar sardonic edge of conversation, the strange combination of hedonism and hopelessness, that give an individual note to this strange place have not yet found their screenwriter in the sense that similar Texas found *Hud's* the Ravetches.

What of the future? Clearly, the only wan hope is in the new government scheme and, more certainly, to develop co-production schemes to the point where they can give breaks to Australian directors, and can co-star Australians with Americans in locally-written stories. But that opens another question: can Australia hold an actor, director or writer who has reached this level? Or is it, as it has been for generations, going to be bled of its talents and skills by the headquarters cities of the Northern Hemisphere, thousands of miles away, across the equator?

CHARLES HIGHAM

Hitch on Topaz

WHEN I SPOKE to Hitchcock last September, he was fairly recently back from France and a last-minute shooting session on *Topaz*. The film had been finished months before, and it is rare enough for a big company to go to the expense of re-activating a disbanded unit; rarer still when the director is Alfred Hitchcock, whose films are com-

pleted in his mind before they ever get on to the floor. What had happened to *Topaz*?

It had happened, of course, to the ending. Hitchcock's original concluded with a duel between Devereaux, the French diplomat spy, and Granville, head of 'Topaz', Russia's man in the Gaullist corridors of power, and lover of Mme. Devereaux. The duel was preceded, Hitchcock said, by a Devereaux family conclave in which he had rehearsed, as it were for himself, all likely anti-duel arguments—unrealistic, silly, anachronistic, etc. Then to the duel: the formality of pistols for two in the Hitchcock setting of a deserted football field. At some point, Devereaux was to realise that his opponent was breaking duelling etiquette by fighting to kill; and was then to be saved by an even more ungentlemanly intervention—Granville's death, from a bullet fired by a sniper high up in the empty stand. Who killed him, someone asked? Well, his cover was blown and he was expendable. . . .

It sounded like a real old Hitchcock set-piece, perhaps at odds with his other stress that this was his 'realistic' spy picture, but full of gloating contrasts and paradoxes. But to any American preview audience, apparently, the duel had seemed plain impossible. And so, philosophical and genial as ever, maybe saving up his football field duel to join other ideas waiting for a plot, like the corpse falling out of a car on the assembly line, Hitchcock had packed his bags and gone back to Paris to shoot ending Mark Two. Devereaux and Granville are simultaneously leaving from Orly, one heading West and one East. Granville, the resilient survivor, pauses on his gangway to raise his hat.

This also seemed to have satisfied Hitchcock, emphasising that top-class spying, though an arduous trade, is seldom fatal, and rounding off a pattern of defecation. But then, at the film's London press show on November 4th, up popped ending Mark Three. No duel; no Orly; only a shot of Granville's front door (retrieved from an earlier scene), a gun-shot sound over, and a frozen frame. The critics saw this version,

but no one else. When the film opened on November 6th, Orly was in again and Granville was still alive and smiling at the finish. Altogether, a most un-Hitchcockian little puzzle, which has the effect of leaving one distinctly curious about the one ending we haven't seen. 'I'll probably let Langlois have it,' Hitchcock said, when I asked him where this tantalising fragment was likely to come to rest.

The *Topaz* variations make a footnote for Hitchcock archivists. Postscript for ornithologists: the seagulls who pinch the bread from the Cuban spies' picnic, so alerting the guards to an inquisitive presence, were prepared for flight by the bird-trainer of *The Birds*. One can't imagine the great professional encouraging amateur seagulls to clutter up the place.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Gherardi in London

I HAVE AN appointment one wet Saturday morning in October with Piero Gherardi, leading Italian stage and film designer, now working on *The White Devil* for the National Theatre, and best known for his association with Fellini on *La Strada*, *La Dolce Vita*, *8½* and *Giulietta degli Spiriti*. We have arranged to meet at the Old Vic Annex, and Gherardi is slightly late. His assistant says, ominously, that Gherardi has been known to get out of his bath and go back to bed. But no, we soon see him stride down The Cut, his arms crossed beneath a neatly-folded white mackintosh: greyish hair and a close-cropped greying beard, pink sweater and large suede boots. When he pushes his spectacles back along his forehead, which he frequently does, he looks a little like one of those charming, absent-minded Jules Verne scientists.

He tells me how both he and Fellini are fascinated by the morbid, and how at least two of their ventures had a funerary inspiration. The idea for *8½* came from a long autumnal visit to the grave of Fellini's father; and photographs Gherardi had taken of the ornate tomb statuary in the Staglieno cemetery in Genoa—they were especially moved by one of a small boy with a carved butterfly on his shoulder—gave them the visual motif for *Giulietta*, though Gherardi was later also influenced by the paintings of Klimt, Moreau and the Pre-Raphaelites.

Gherardi can sometimes spend up to 10 months driving about with a chauffeur and a photographer looking for locations—with the occasional plaintive 'phone call from Fellini asking him what he is up to. Eventually they have made their final choice, Gherardi likes, on the morning of the shooting, to change one location for another, since Fellini, he knows, is stimulated by the partially unexpected. (On *Giulietta*, however, he was not so much stimulated as disconcerted by some of the huge, floppy hats.) Both of them enjoy putting locations to unusual use: the railway station and the spa in *8½* were in reality an engine shed, dolled up, and what had been, in Fascist times, an army barracks.

Fellini hates to leave Rome for more than a day and looks askance if asked to film even at Viterbo, only twenty miles or so out of the city. Gherardi once wanted him to shoot a sequence in Naples, but his friend found every possible excuse for not doing so. Between productions Fellini seldom goes to the theatre, the cinema or to art galleries and depends for spiritual nourishment on his circle of Roman muses, a group of

"TOPAZ": THE ORIGINAL ENDING, WITH GRANVILLE (MICHEL PICCOLI) ASSASSINATED ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD.





PIERO GHERARDI. PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN CARLSEN.

plump, middle-aged ladies of strictly local origin: a woman from Milan, say, will be considered foreign and disquieting.

Yet in production Fellini opens up to advice and, indeed, has a talent for bringing his own richness to other people's memories. Gherardi mentions Marcello's bath-tub fantasy in *8½*. It was filmed on his farm near Florence and based on a ritual he remembers from his boyhood: how local peasants would dip children into vats of fermenting grape—in the belief that the juice would strengthen their bodies. The encounter in the cellar with a prostitute and the grandiose scenes in the Turkish baths were also Gherardi anecdotes, transformed.

Gherardi owns seven or eight houses, one of them in Bangkok, where he spends a month's holiday every summer. He had been working in Bangkok shortly before he designed *La Dolce Vita*: hence its many Oriental touches. But he continues to think of himself as Florentine and plans to keep on his two places in Tuscany. In *La Dolce Vita* the great party at Bassano di Sutri, ostensibly a Roman occasion, is deliberately Florentine in its informal dress—an attempt to escape from the monotony of black tie. The aristocrats around Florence, unlike the people in Roman high society, are still countrified, and Gherardi recalls pleasant parties at which some of the guests would appear in hunting gear. (Later Gherardi, the countryman, was to propose that he and I should hire a pair of thoroughly decrepit horses and ride around Regent's Park.)

For Gherardi, Visconti is a historian, Antonioni a master technician, but Fellini is the only true film director. If you really want to appreciate his talent, he believes, you should see his films during the various stages of editing: many of the most dazzling sequences end up on the cutting-room floor. It would be instructive to show these discarded sequences to film societies (why, he asks, don't the BFI archives try to get hold of them?). Yet Fellini's work was not much liked in his own country; it is only after his films have had some success abroad that most Italians begin to enjoy them. In Viterbo, for instance, *8½* so infuriated the public that it tore up the seats (perhaps Fellini had good reason for not wishing to go there); and yes, the fantasy scenes really were tinted green.

Gherardi speaks no English and feels

amazed and lost in London; and so, after he has shown me some of the costumes for *The White Devil*—startling and prodigious confections, inspired by Elizabethan art, burial ornaments and the morphology of insects—I suggest that we go on a tour of London. In Soho he sighs at seeing a restaurant named *La Dolce Vita*, then claims without pride to have started in that film the fashion for floppy hats and for maxi and mini-skirts—and says that these conceptions, though appropriate to the Fellini atmosphere, become tawdry when adapted to everyday use. In Foyle's he buys some Pollock theatre cut-outs and the two *Alice* books—for the Tenniel drawings. He hopes shortly to take up a long cherished commission: to design another movie version of *Pinocchio*. It would be modelled on the original illustrations by Chiostri and owe nothing to vulgar Disney. Not that he is against vulgarity. The trouble at present with most opera presentations is their refinement: he thinks the quality of singing alone matters, and sets and productions should be either determinedly tatty or as flamboyant as the paintings of Delacroix.

At the Soane Museum he complains about the stubborn indifference to culture of cameramen everywhere, speaks well of the Canalettos and hopes that I will see *Casanova*, a film where he tried hard, and with some success, to recreate the Canaletto world. At the Courtauld he swiftly walks a daunting wall of Cézannes, arguing that they had been destroyed for him by all those reproductions, and unerringly picks out the few second-rate pictures in the collection. He finds genuine nuances in them. The highlight of our tour is a visit to St. Pancras Station (How *dare* they wish to destroy it? Why do British directors so often miss their chances?). On the Fellini principle of using locations in an unusual way, we both agree that St. Pancras would make an ideal setting for the Vatican in the proposed film of *Hadrian VII*. Gherardi, incidentally, thinks the Venetian writings of Baron Corvo to be a valuable gloss on Webster's intentions in *The White Devil*.

ERIC RHODE

Protest at Pesaro

PESARO'S FIFTH FESTIVAL of *nuovo cinema* presented more stimulating ideas than good films, and notably more *vérité* than *cinéma*. The unifying theme of its promised round-table discussions—"the necessity and possibility of an alternative circuit"—produced some bitter arguments about strategy and semantics alike. The table was oblong, monopolised by invited speakers whose papers rarely referred, even parenthetically, to the films being shown, while would-be participants were generally invited to respect the agenda and postpone their observations for another session.

It was argued whether the Festival, even in its newly modified structure, was helping to implement its objectives: radical reorganisation of production/distribution systems; the creation of politically engaged films which in turn would create an audience of participants rather than mere spectators. Even though all screenings, now moved to the vast and uncomfortable premises of the town's sports stadium, were now open to the public, local participation seemed to consist mainly of catcalling at the frequent breakdowns in the earphone translation system. And this gave rise to a vituperative but unresolved debate about the nature of political cinema: whether it's the text or the context that determines a film's political efficacy.

Meanwhile the films themselves provided ample demonstration of the heterogeneous concepts that can be subsumed under the phrase 'political cinema'. In an effort to identify their activities with the Third World's liberation struggle, young directors from capitalist countries tended to magnify the degree of oppression under which they live and labour, thereby producing an effect more of self-indulgence than of solidarity. *The Truth about Baastad*, Lars Westman's documentary montage about student demonstrators being hosed down by the Swedish police, suffered from this kind of rhetorical extrapolation, while also sharing with the Belgian student film, *Collective C4*, a touching faith in the stamina of its

KEVIN BILLINGTON DIRECTS ARTHUR LOWE IN "THE RISE AND RISE OF MICHAEL RIMMER"





"HUNTING SCENES FROM LOWER BAVARIA"

audience to absorb information relayed through blown up 16 mm. footage shot with a querulously hand-held camera. Seen in this context, it was hard to tell whether Pedro Portabella's *Nocturno 29*, a difficult but dazzlingly inventive surrealist fable from Spain, was really as good as it looked or whether one was just responding gratefully to its technical expertise. Similarly with *Antenna*, a Dutch short in stunningly modulated colour whose satire of military and religious institutions—equally influenced by Voltaire and Godard—culminates in Pierre Clémenti appearing as Jesus Christ to distribute hashish to young disciples.

Predictably, the Soviet films sidestepped the problem of defining political cinema in a contemporary context by nostalgically celebrating the triumphs of 1917 or attempting to build relationships such as that between a peasant and his horse into some vaguely edifying allegory. Beside them, the films from the satellite countries (widely criticised for their negative portrayal of post-Revolutionary society) seemed like products of a different era. Dusan Hanak's 322 achieves a brittle balance between humour and despair, its hero an unsuspecting cancer victim who spends his enforced leisure trying to make sense of his past and present relationships while continuing from laziness and habit to share a house with his materialistic ex-wife. Boro Draskovic's *Horoscope* sardonically chronicles the boredom in a small Adriatic town where only the arrival of the international train sustains the dream of a better life elsewhere and even violence breeds no lasting changes.

Certainly it was the Cuban films that came as the Festival's major revelation, combining a positive political direction with a respect for traditional narrative techniques (like metaphor) and technical excellence. Of those not shown already in London, Pastor Vega's semi-documentary *De La Guerra Americana* was perhaps the most impressive, minutely detailing the poverty and oppression that drive men into becoming guerrillas while achieving a generalised truth from the fact that its setting is left deliberately unspecified.

However, the old world did produce one masterpiece. Peter Fleischmann's *Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria* is a ruthlessly and brilliantly amusing study of a village community that ostracises a farm-hand suspected of pederastic tendencies and drives him to murder before tracking him down in an organised manhunt. Its scenes of country life (including a compelling pig-slaughtering/sausage-making scene with children casually putting on the animal's mutilated appendages) are as rich in detail as Breughel and Flaubert combined; and though its theme may be the inhumanity of prejudice, its characters are never for one second anything but fallibly and insensitively human.

JAN DAWSON

Close Call for Cahiers

THERE HAD BEEN rumours for months that there was some difference of opinion between the editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma* and their backer, Daniel Filipacchi, about the way the magazine was being run. (M. Filipacchi, who took *Cahiers* under his wing in 1965, is best known for his best-selling youth magazine, *Salut les Copains*.) Then, during October, the newspapers announced a 'strike' at *Cahiers*, though it turned out to be more like a 'lock-out'. Filipacchi and Company had 'struck' against the editors of the magazine, saying that it had become 'an obscure and indigestible publication from which all objectivity is excluded.' The editors were accused of being overly totalitarian; they were too enclosed, too much of a coterie; and they were further reproached for the ugly layout. (On this last point, the editors were in agreement—although not, of course, on the others.)

In the last week of October, it appeared that *Cahiers* was finished. The publisher simply would not go on. He would retain the title; the editors planned to start a new magazine. Now, it seems, they have reached some sort of compromise. The current issue will come out, and M. Filipacchi is allowing the editors to buy back the title. The finances of *Cahiers* are a little confused to me, but

it would seem that the backing came from two sources. First, there was the 20 million old francs that Doniol-Valcroze and Truffaut had put in years ago; and then there is the 30 million old francs of Filipacchi. If the editors of *Cahiers* can refund the 30 millions, then they get the magazine back, title and all.

This is no easy job, and it was not made easier by the editors' determination not to get the bulk of the money from any one source—to reduce the risk of the sort of predicament they are now in, one supposes. They began the arduous job of raising it in dribs and drabs, collecting quite a bit by way of some benefit film performances put on at the Studio Action. At the time of writing, they claim to be within sight of their goal. One can but rejoice. After all, there are far too few film magazines around. And, with all its irritations, what *would* we do without it?

RICHARD ROUD

The Revolutionary

PAUL WILLIAMS is a tall 25-year-old New Yorker who looks slightly myopic behind his pale-rimmed spectacles, and sounds slightly tired when he talks. A Harvard Phi Beta Kappa (Psychology), he came to Cambridge in 1965 for post-graduate work, became more and more distracted by making films, then met Ed Pressman, more or less the same age, equally mad about movies, and recently dropped-out from LSE. Together they made a short, *Girl*; then went on to do a feature, financed by Pressman who had just inherited his father's interests in the family business. The film was *Out of It*, a work of beautiful comic observation and invention, about the problems of high school life. After several other companies had made complimentary remarks and derisory money offers, *Out of It* was bought by United Artists, who incidentally offered a three picture contract to Pressman and Williams.

The first film under the contract is *The Revolutionary*. Williams would have liked to make it in Prague; but the Soviet invasion forestalled him. The scriptwriter, Hans Koningsberger, favoured England as a second choice; suitable locations were available here; and in the end budget considerations dictated it. 'I think I would have tried to make it for 20,000 dollars, though,' says Williams, 'just because I wanted to tell the story.'

Koningsberger, who adapted his own novel about the adventures of a clumsy young liberal student who becomes an active revolutionary, says of it: 'Practically every revolutionary throughout history has been middle-class. He is no exception. The reasons for calling him 'A', as we do in the film, are really not Kafkaesque, but more a way of giving a message. I prefer to leave his name and the place unidentifiable. And really they are not important. It is a story that could take place anywhere in the free world, and it shows how a young student can become radical. Most of the things that happen to him arise not so much from choice, but by the logic of events which gain force from modest beginnings.'

In the film 'A' is played by Jon Voight, who was prepared to pass up a quarter-million dollar role in a big production in order to work again with Williams, who gave him his first film role in *Out of It*, in which he plays the bone-headed, bullying, ball-team Adonis.

On a chilly night in October, Williams was shooting the final scenes, on his sixtieth location (or thereabouts)—this one a

bleakish army tank-testing area in the wilds of Buckinghamshire. The scene follows A's desertion from the army: Voight, walking along a lonely country road, had to hitch a lift from a passing lorry. Stretching far into the distance, a line of arcs moon-lit a 200-yard stretch of road. The take in progress involved some pretty elaborate *mise-en-shot*. Williams and Voight had quite evidently gone over it very precisely in advance (Williams values the work of his actors, and so likes ample pre-production rehearsal) so that Voight, rather than Williams himself, tended to work out the details of his moves with the camera operator, Herb Smith. (The lighting cameraman on the film is Brian Probyn, whom Williams asked for after seeing his work on *Poor Cow*.)

This was, in fact, a comparatively simple set-up for *The Revolutionary*. Much of the film has been shot in three or four minute takes. 'Elaborate *mise-en-scène* can of course inhibit actors, but in our case I think it actually helps them. Working in three-minute takes they are able to get into the scene. It makes for good performances.' The directors who most impress Williams are Fellini ('for the choreography of the scenes'), the early Huston ('especially on *Out of It* where we had to work more simply') and Truffaut ('for the characters').

Out of It, he now feels, was dull visually as a result of being made too cheaply; but it clarified his ideas about the camera. 'Basically you must be true. You must believe entirely in your location. And you must always remain *invisible*, while being very sophisticated visually in terms of surface and planes and visual rhythms. The planes must move the camera around, and not the reverse.' He enjoys working with Voight, who has come to share his pre-occupations with camera truth. 'One day I had to take away a wall of the set to accommodate the camera, and Jon was very upset. He said I was not respecting the geography of the set, and people would realise that the cameraman was in a special position. I explained that the camera would still be within the room area; I only took the wall away to make space for the camera crew. Then he was happy and went ahead with the scene.'

JOHN WILSON

1969

Obituary

JANUARY: Irene Castle, dancer immortalised in the Ginger Rogers-Fred Astaire *Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*; Charles Winninger, avuncular, ex-vaudevillian character actor, Judge Priest in Ford's *The Sun Shines Bright*; Micheline Francey, French actress (*Le Corbeau*, *La Cage aux Rossignols*), latterly producer with Europe 1 radio; Barton MacLane, perennial tough guy, cop or gangster; Jean Ozenne, veteran French actor (*Belles de Nuit*, *Rue de l'Estrapade*); Peter Tyla, cartoon creator of Popeye, Snow White, Dumbo; Hugo Haas, actor and director of much melodrama.

FEBRUARY: Boris Karloff, without whom the dark of the moon...; Henry Deutschmeister, enterprising French producer (*La Beauté du Diable*, *Madame De...*, *French Cancan*); Thelma Ritter, specialist in sharp-tongued motherly bodies; Michael Reeves, brilliant young British director cut tragically short in a promising career (*The Sorcerers*, *Witchfinder General*); George 'Gabby' Hayes, hirsute comedy relief in the Hopalong Cassidy films; John Boles, singing heart-throb and jeune premier of the early Thirties (*The Desert Song*, *Back*

Street, *Stella Dallas*), later played Shirley Temple's father, etc.

MARCH: Charles Brackett, Billy Wilder's other half, later producer in his own right (*Titanic*, *The King and I*); Miles Malleon, chinless ditherer of countless British films; Alan Mowbray, stalwart of Hollywood's British colony, especially memorable for his tipsy thespian and histrionic quack in *My Darling Clementine* and *Wagonmaster*; Eugene Sharin, assistant to Murnau, then scriptwriter (*Journey into Fear*, *Lifeboat*).

APRIL: Fortunio Bonanova, veteran Hollywood character actor, invariably playing operatic Italians; B. Traven, author of *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*; Josef Auerbach, producer of the celebrated Hedy Lamarr nude, *Ecstasy*; Howard Bretherton, veteran director of the Hopalong Cassidy series.

MAY: Karl Freund, great cameraman of *Der Golem*, *Metropolis*, *Camille*, *Key Largo*, director of *Mad Love*, the film every Peter Lorre fan is dying to see; Mitzi Green, child star of *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Little Orphan Annie* in the early Thirties; Jeffrey Hunter, Frank James in *The True Story of Jesse James*, Christ in *King of Kings* (both for Nicholas Ray); Rhys Williams, Welsh character actor in Hollywood (*How Green Was My Valley*, *The Corn is Green*); Eli Lotar, French cameraman (*Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*, *Terre Sans Pain*); Enid Bennett, silent star (*Robin Hood*, *The Sea Hawk*).

JUNE: Leo Gorcey, one of the original Dead End Kids; Hilde Körber, German actress, formerly wife of Veit Harlan; John Bryan, British art director (*Pygmalion*, *Great Expectations*, *Becket*); Jay Lewis, British producer and director (*The Baby and the Battleship*, *Live Now—Pay Later*); Robert Taylor, Armand to Garbo's Camille; Natalie Talmadge, rescued by Buster from the waterfall in *Our Hospitality*; Martita Hunt, eccentric grande dame of the British cinema, notable for her Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*; Frank Lawton, Cukor's David Copperfield; the incomparable Judy

PAUL WILLIAMS, JON VOIGHT.



Garland; Nathalie Lissenko, star of Mosjoukine's *Le Brasier Ardent*, *Kean*.

JULY: Gladys Swarthout, operatic star of the Thirties; Peter Van Eyck, American actor, usually of Germanic types (*Five Graves to Cairo*) who found stardom abroad (*The Wages of Fear*); Bogumil Kobiela, Polish actor (*Ashes and Diamonds*, *Bad Luck*); Raymond Walburn, specialist in amiable imbeciles (*High, Wide and Handsome*, *Hail the Conquering Hero*); Mikio Naruse, one of the great Japanese directors, barely known in the West; Leo McCarey, directed Laurel and Hardy, The Marx Brothers, Mae West in some of the finest and funniest Hollywood comedies; Henri Decoin, French director.

AUGUST: Mildred Davis, succeeded Bebe Daniels as Harold Lloyd's leading lady; William Goetz, production chief at Universal from 1946-1954; Selig J. Seligman, Hollywood producer (*Charly*, *Hell in the Pacific*); Sigrid Gurie, the 'Norwegian Garbo' who unfortunately never found films to match the title; Martin Miller, veteran character actor in British films, of Czech origin; Joseph Kosma, composer of all those moodily melodic Carné theme tunes; Sharon Tate, victim of a particularly brutal murder at the start of a promising career (*Dance of the Vampires*, *Valley of the Dolls*).

SEPTEMBER: Rex Ingram, 'De Lawd' in *Green Pastures*; Krzysztof Komeda, Polish composer, notably for Polanski's films; Ake Grönberg, Bergman stalwart, the tormented circus-owner in *Sawdust and Tinsel*.

OCTOBER: Rod la Rocque, romantic swash-buckler of silents, latterly a real-estate broker; Fred Kohlmar, veteran producer (*Kiss of Death*, *Pal Joey*, several Judy Holliday comedies), one-time right-hand man to Sam Goldwyn; Sonja Henie, ice-skating queen; Eduardo Ciannelli, Diamond Louie in *Front Page*, the tubercular gunman in *Winter set*.

NOVEMBER: René Jeanne, French film historian; Gus McNaughton, British character actor, one-time member of Fred Karno's Company.

The Top Ten

SIGHT AND SOUND staff writers' choices for the year:

ARTISTES AT THE TOP OF THE BIG TOP: DIS-ORIENTATED *** BAISERS VOLES *** LA COLLECTIONNEUSE *** DAVID HOLZMAN'S DIARY *** LA FEMME INFIDELE *** THE IMMORTAL STORY *** INNOCENCE UNPROTECTED *** MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT *** THE SHAME *** THE WILD BUNCH—*Jan Dawson*.

ARTISTES AT THE TOP OF THE BIG TOP: DIS-ORIENTATED *** BAISERS VOLES *** EVERYTHING FOR SALE *** THE IMMORTAL STORY *** MY NIGHT WITH MAUD *** OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR *** SILENCE AND CRY *** THEOREM *** LA VOIE LACTEE *** THE WILD BUNCH—*Penelope Houston*.

LES BICHES *** CAPRICIOUS SUMMER *** DIARY OF A SHINJUKU THIEF *** LA FEMME INFIDELE *** GOTO *** THE IMMORTAL STORY *** SECRET CEREMONY *** THE SHAME *** THE TRIP *** THE WILD BUNCH—*Tom Milne*.

ARTISTES AT THE TOP OF THE BIG TOP: DIS-ORIENTATED *** BAISERS VOLES *** CAPRICIOUS SUMMER *** LA COLLECTIONNEUSE *** EVERYTHING FOR SALE *** IF... *** THE IMMORTAL STORY *** THE TEN THOUSAND SUNS *** THEOREM *** LA VOIE LACTEE—*David Wilson*.



"POINT BLANK"

ISLANDS OF THE MIND

John Lindsay Brown

HOW MANY CRITICS, auteur-oriented or otherwise, would nominate John Boorman as the most important of the younger generation of English directors (that 'next renaissance' as David Robinson termed it a year ago in *SIGHT AND SOUND*)? Not many, one would guess—he is not even named in Robinson's article, for example—and yet Boorman's three feature films to date reveal a remarkable consistency of thematic development and basic structure that sharply distinguishes his work from the interesting but more fragmented efforts of his contemporaries.

This consistency is all the more remarkable when one considers how Boorman, working entirely within the commercial framework, has tackled a considerable variety of subject-material. His first film, *Catch Us If You Can* (1965), was obviously conceived by its producers as a small-budget exploitation vehicle for the Dave Clark Five, but turned out, thanks to the director, as something else entirely. Boorman's second feature, in contrast, was a large-scale Hollywood production, the gangster thriller *Point Blank* (1967), which he again transformed, this time from some brutalised sub-

Spillane origins into what is one of the most important movies about America in the sixties. And his third film, *Hell in the Pacific* (1968), is, in a special sense, a war film. Nevertheless, these films are all unified into a still-developing pattern by Boorman's central concern: the exploration (in the form of a parable or allegory) of what happens when the individual asserts his own will in the face of the collectivising influences and the forces of conformity in contemporary society. These influences are given different embodiments in each film and are felt with varying degrees of intensity; but no matter what their form, they are always seen as acting to diminish the status of the individual, his sense of identity and his choice of action and behaviour.

Catch Us If You Can is an interesting rather than a successful film, but it displays in a fairly light way and despite the limitations of the genre all the preoccupations that characterise Boorman's work. The forces of conformity, for example, appear in the shape of modern advertising aimed first at the creation and then the control of a trivialised mass taste; it's against these values of advertising (specifically, the 'Butcha

Girl' campaign) that the heroine (Barbara Ferris) and her stunt man friend (Dave Clark) rebel.

As in all Boorman's films, this assertion of individuality takes the form of a journey that is also a quest—they run away to the island off the Devon coast that becomes for them an explicit symbol of escape. In this film, the journey is also a flight, as the advertising men pursue them through the West Country; but when they finally arrive at the island, they discover that their flight has simply brought them face to face with their chief pursuer, the enigmatic boss of the advertising agency. Again as in all Boorman's work, the film's basic structure is circular, bringing the individual to a greater or lesser degree back to the point where, thematically, he started. Here, Barbara Ferris is 'repossessed' by the agency men despite Clark's attempts to reach her through the milling crowd of reporters who think it's all been a publicity stunt. In fact, what is finally most remarkable about *Catch Us If You Can* (in retrospect a bitterly ironic title) is exactly this sense of defeat, this tone of sadness which contrasts very strongly (especially in the dreamlike shots—a recurrent feature in Boorman's work—of the agency boss gazing at the photographs of Barbara Ferris) with the frenetic style of Dick Lester's Beatle movies, whose success presumably inspired the idea of this film.

* * *

Point Blank, made two years later in California, represents an enormous leap forward in every respect, but above all stylistically—as Richard Roud remarked in his *Guardian* review, the film's visual impact is sufficiently overpowering to 'drown the fish'. *Catch Us If You Can* is certainly good to look at, especially in its use of winter landscapes, but here Boorman, obviously drawing on greater technical and budgetary resources, reinforces this response to his physical environment with wide-screen colour camerawork (by Philip Lathrop) that appropriately tracks, swerves, tilts and zooms to tell the tortuous story of a man (Lee Marvin) ruthlessly taking on a big gangster organisation to get the money out of which he has been cheated. Added to this is an editing style markedly influenced by Resnais that begins at near-subliminal speed, totally eliding or reversing various plot points, inter-cutting flashback with flashback or slow-motion repetition of previous scenes, until by the sheer force of stylisation *Point Blank* rises to the level of a parable about the individual in contemporary American society.

In doing this, Boorman is of course drawing on an established tradition of social comment in American crime films: such works as Walsh's *White Heat*, Losey's *The Prowler*, Fuller's *Underworld U.S.A.*, Siegel's *The Line-Up*, and above all perhaps Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly* and Penn's *Mickey One*, stand in line behind *Point Blank*. The opening sequence of Boorman's film, however, is definitely post-Marienbad; and although a fair amount of intelligible information about the characters and story-line is present in the chaos of fast cuts and repetitions, its principal effect is to isolate Marvin from all purely social explanation or background. Abstracted in this way from any kind of naturalistic origin, he becomes Boorman's symbol of the unfettered individualist (a clear development from the weaker, more tentative protagonists of the previous film), a man who will take such an attitude to its workable limits.

It is only at the conclusion of *Catch Us If You Can* that the parable comes to the surface—only then do we see the characters and their situation as referring to a more general theme—but *Point Blank* sustains both the plot and the metaphor from the start. The collectivising forces are not located here in any social institution, but in the hierarchical structure of the gangster organisation itself. This organisation is seen, of course, as running parallel to the normal social structure, and to a certain extent as being contained within it—in this case, that of modern American capitalism. It is run on conventional business lines, with luxurious head offices, executives, secretaries and so on; Reese (the man who seduced Marvin's wife and cheated him of the money) is summoned and treated just like a promising junior executive with a problem that the company is paternally concerned about; the

'chairmen' Carter and Brewster have all the appearance and trappings of respectable and conservative businessmen. When Marvin approaches them in turn, each man is appalled by his brutal directness and determination; each tells Marvin helplessly, 'You just can't do this!' Thus the collectivising forces are now defined as being inherent in the social structure, which necessarily lays down certain acceptable patterns of behaviour.

The quest in *Point Blank* is in no sense a flight—Marvin steers a collision course with the organisation from the start. Nevertheless, despite the exhilaration of Marvin's ruthless drive towards his elusive money, *Point Blank* contains the bleakest expression of Boorman's themes to date, for even Marvin cannot win against these forces of collectivisation. His violence, for example, comes to nothing; despite the general atmosphere of violence and the killer aspect of his personality, Marvin himself is responsible in the film for *no one's* death. His instinctual, unpredictable violence is contrasted in this, of course, with that of the organisation, which is precise, controlled and successful.

In terms of theme, therefore, Marvin learns at the end of the complex plot that even his uncompromising individualism has been assimilated and used by the system, personified by the third chairman, the mysterious figure who has previously appeared as Marvin's informant. (This enigmatic and apparently omniscient character is obviously the counterpart of the agency boss in *Catch Us If You Can*: they occupy exactly the same role in the structure of the plot, and even the actors who play them, Keenan Wynn and David de Keyser respectively, are not physically dissimilar. Thus both films have this curiously paranoid aspect, this hint of an evil genius behind it all pulling the strings—an idea conspicuously absent from the conception of *Hell in the Pacific*.) This third chairman has used Marvin's obsession to help him destroy his rivals in the organisation; but when he offers Marvin the long-sought money as a reward for this, the latter retreats, in a kind of impotence, into the shadows, realising at last his own complicity and refusing to act any longer in this world of treachery and deception.

The gradual disappearance of his face suggests already, perhaps, the disintegration of the individual will or self. In a world like that revealed in *Point Blank* not even the pure individualist can survive on his own terms, because organised society is too strong and too corrupting. This defeat is underlined by the perfect circle of the plot: the film both begins and ends with Marvin's betrayal and belated recognition of the facts on Alcatraz Island, in the deserted prison which (as the point where the two structures, criminal and respectable, coincide) becomes itself a reverberating image of Boorman's vision.

Although there is not space here to analyse it as fully as it deserves (especially the astonishing set-pieces, such as Marvin's meeting with his wife, or the storm-drain sequence), *Point Blank* is to my mind Boorman's finest and most complex work to date, and one of the key American films of the decade. It embodies in Marvin's instinctual violence an increasingly common American life-style—that spirit of frustration in the face of totalitarian society and of subsequent, compensatory violence, a spirit that unifies Dallas, Detroit and Berkeley, however much the targets may have varied in each case. By forcing us to take sides with Marvin against the social power structure embodied in the organisation, and to share his motives and actions, *Point Blank* leads us to understand something of the pressures in modern America that, for men like the film's hero, make violence and revolution 'the only pure acts,' the only way that a rebellion can be defined when the system reacts by absorbing and therefore nullifying all other protest. Moreover *Point Blank* leads us to understand something else: that such *individual* revolution will never succeed, that the individual, in the last analysis, is powerless.

* * *

Point Blank exists in exactly the form, presumably, that Boorman wished, but his latest feature to be shown, *Hell in the Pacific*, has undergone some changes. Its original title was *The Enemy*, which is a far more appropriate title for its

story of two men, one American (again, Lee Marvin) and a Japanese (Toshiro Mifune) alone together on a tiny Pacific island during the war, than the present title, which is obviously intended to suggest to potential audiences a very different kind of war film, such as Marvin's other movie *The Dirty Dozen* (the type of war film, incidentally, that *Hell in the Pacific* criticises by implication). More serious, however, is the change of ending in the version shown in this country. As Boorman originally shot it, and as it was shown in the States, the two men separate after their final quarrel, realising that their private alliance cannot survive the barriers between them. In the present ending, the two are frozen by the frame at the moment of death, when a stray shell hits their shelter. Thus in Boorman's original, *Hell in the Pacific* maintains the perfect circular structure, the meeting at the beginning balanced by the parting at the end.

In a television interview where he explained this, Boorman seemed rather disenchanted with the finished film; and after the richness and complexity of *Point Blank*, *Hell in the Pacific* does appear at first to be a much slighter work. It must be acknowledged, certainly, that the scenario is sometimes stretched rather thinly to cover the hundred minutes of running time; and this weakness is emphasised by the fact that, as a parable, *Hell in the Pacific* is much purer in form than Boorman's earlier work. There the general references of the parable emerged gradually from the specific narrative, but here the whole conception of the scenario imposes an immediate allegorical significance on a story-line that is not always strong enough to support it.

But although there exist these considerable flaws in the conception which the execution never really overcomes, *Hell in the Pacific* remains, as a whole, a brilliant and deceptively simple work that for the most part admirably avoids the sentimentality and pretentiousness one might expect from its subject-matter. The most immediate virtue, as in *Point Blank*, is the stunning photography, this time by Conrad Hall—surely the physical presence of jungle, sea and climate has never been rendered so sensuously as here? Marvin crashing through the undergrowth as smoke billows about him, and later lying in a pool of mud in a torrential downpour; Mifune moving almost imperceptibly through the jungle, a shadow amongst shadows, and standing motionless in a curtain of green rain—from the bleakness of the West Country in winter and the concrete wilderness of Los Angeles to the lush, dank, filthy and beautiful Pacific islands, Boorman's eye for and response to his physical environment remains astonishingly fresh and immediate.

Furthermore, the visual style of *Hell in the Pacific* carries on from *Point Blank* that tendency to drown the fish, as one dazzling shot rapidly succeeds another. Indeed, the visual fragmentation here is even more pronounced, especially in the first half of the film; at a guess, *Hell in the Pacific* contains almost twice the number of set-ups in a usual feature film. And finally there are two small idiosyncrasies that recall Boorman's previous film: the first close-up of Marvin, his face deep in shadow, takes up the final view of him in *Point Blank*, while the same character's inexplicable escape from his yoke has the same unsettling effect as the similar but more frequent elisions in the other film.

Not only is there a stylistic continuation here, however: *Hell in the Pacific* takes up and extends, admittedly rather schematically, the themes of the two earlier films to a particular point, which Boorman has moved towards from the start of his work in the cinema. As before, the basic conflict is between the individual will and the forces of collectivisation and mass behaviour. But here the conflict is abstracted into terms of ideas. Both men respond to each other at the beginning not as human beings but as stimuli; if their first reaction is to fight (a reaction parodied in the consciously overdramatic pose of the two at opposite sides of the frame), then *Hell in the Pacific* makes it plain that this response is not a truly natural one—that is, not a truly individualistic one—but a conditioned response. They are both governed by those conditioning forces, which are (especially in wartime but also at other times) national circumstances, national culture, and in the widest sense national education. This is the final defi-

nition of the collectivising forces towards which the three films move. They are not simply external and localised as in *Catch Us If You Can*, or external and all-pervasive as in *Point Blank*; they are in fact a virtually inescapable part of the psychology of the individual himself, which he acquires through his environment and upbringing.

* * *

As this suggests, the true conflict in *Hell in the Pacific* is interior; the two individuals here are characterised more fully than their predecessors in the earlier films. But although Boorman makes a brave try at creating 'real' people first and representative figures second, he doesn't always succeed, especially at the two key moments of truce and alliance, where the 'real' motivation isn't clear and the symbolic meaning is all too clear. This inadequacy of the scenario apart, the relationship between the two is well-handled. The first shot of Mifune, sitting cross-legged on his patch of sand with evident arrogance, hints quite strongly that his isolation from the company of others is beginning to unbalance him—which explains, of course, his later decision not to kill Marvin when he has the latter at his mercy. Marvin, however, is the first to emphasise the sheer absurdity of the situation, when he speaks to Mifune for the first time, threatening what will happen when he (Marvin) is rescued if Mifune doesn't give him some drinking water. This element of comedy, where the men behave in a way that invites the audience's derisive laughter, is very important for Boorman's purposes, continuing as it does through the film, and keying audience attitudes. The first stage of the conflict is neatly played for laughs—Marvin's attempt to lower the water-bottle, the comic struggle that destroys the drinking-water container, Marvin singing and making a noise in answer to Mifune's over-elaborate defences, his throwing of live bullets into Mifune's fire and his urinating on him, and Mifune's maddened reaction in racing into the sea, spitting and clawing at himself.

But with the subsequent duel between them and Mifune's brutal treatment of the captive Marvin, the tone modulates from the comic and absurd to the extremely bleak. There's no doubt that Mifune, now goaded into a personal rage, is responding as an individual—and that response is Boorman's recognition that violent aggression can derive just as destructively from individual motives as from conditioned ones. These two are never brothers in adversity—they're never even seen to learn a word of each other's language. This sub-theme of personal antagonism lurking just below the surface continues throughout the film in the recurring crucifixion imagery, and acts as a corrective to the potential sentimentality with which the audience might react to the action.

When the situation is reversed, however, Marvin reacts less violently. 'Win a few, lose a few,' he mutters to Mifune, and the humour emphasises his comparative detachment. Moreover, when he reads aloud the military manual instructing him to take no prisoners in jungle warfare, his weary remark 'Washington DC!' marks his conscious rejection of the forms of mass behaviour dictated by war. His attitude to Mifune is further defined in his attempts to teach the Japanese to fetch a stick like a pet dog: if Marvin recognises his captive as an individual, that individuality is still of a lower order than his own. The first tentative suggestion of something more comes in Marvin's highly comic outburst about doing everything while Mifune does nothing—Marvin cuts the astonished prisoner free and storms off (as he himself observed during shooting, according to Boorman, Marvin 'plays the broad'). Thus gradually the two men free themselves from the responses to each other conditioned in them by external circumstances—the distant war is now irrelevant—and react as one person to another.

Thereafter, for a while, they simply co-exist, leading separate lives on the same small area of beach and jungle; and again Boorman uses comedy to stress the irrationality of the situation, as when Marvin spitefully destroys the patterns that Mifune has drawn so painstakingly on the sand. But the boredom and monotony of their lives gradually forces them together, and another comic rage from Marvin (over Mifune's use of 'his' log to make a primitive raft) marks what is, in



LEE MARVIN IN "HELL IN THE PACIFIC"

fact, the beginning of their co-operation. It is, however, a co-operation that is not in any way sentimentalised; after the discreet symbolism of the birds and the cutting of the bamboo, Boorman has them quarrel over the type of raft needed and avoids any stirring cross-fades of smiles and togetherness through raft-building by simply cutting from the planning to the finished object.

The subsequent voyage and the men's ordeal by sun and storm (powerfully conveyed by the camera in monochrome and bleached images) is the symbolic high point of their separate peace. They are simply shown as working together on the raft; if at one point Marvin protects the sleeping Mifune's back from the sun, this is balanced by the sudden flare-up when a plane passes overhead. The final scenes on the ocean, showing both men lashed to the raft, seem an explicit allusion to the crucifixion imagery of the earlier sequences. Their alliance is at best a realistically shaky one.

The last sequence of *Hell in the Pacific*, beginning with their landfall at the larger group of islands, marks the re-emergence by implication of the collectivising forces, as the two men try to discover which side is occupying the island, while the sound of shelling rolls in the distance. They separately explore the ruined blockhouses—there is one moment when Marvin rushes through the ruins shouting to the Americans he wrongly supposes are there, 'Don't shoot, he's my friend!' that is extremely moving because of the thematic understatement elsewhere; it is the only time in the film that their relationship is verbalised. (Unfortunately, in one of the script's worst indulgences, the point is mercilessly repeated a few seconds later in Marvin's line to Mifune, 'I thought you were a Jap.')

Gradually, however, their differences reappear. The landscape, itself a reminder of what their armies have done to each other; the shaving and dressing which accentuate the racially different appearances of the two; the drinking session, with the suggestion that two such explosively individual personalities would never really be able to form a lasting friendship in any circumstances—all these lead up to Mifune's discovery of the war photographs in the magazine and Marvin's pointless, aggressive questions about why the Japanese don't believe in God. On the one hand, a product of the mass media; on the other ideas from a specific, temporal culture about the nature of timeless universal truth—two

powerful examples of the way that the individual's ideas are controlled and limited by the forces of collectivisation and uniformity. The actual ending of *Hell in the Pacific* suggests that the two are about to kill each other anyway when they share an ironic death by a *deus ex machina*; Boorman's original ending has them separating with a certain degree of respect, but with an equally certain knowledge that they cannot, at this moment in time anyway, be truly individualistic, be their own selves. Thus the defeat of the individual impulse is not quite so total as in the earlier films; what this individual American and Japanese have experienced together constitutes, for the first time in Boorman's work, a partial victory.

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In his SIGHT AND SOUND review of *Point Blank*, Philip French observed that, as in *Catch Us If You Can*, 'the underlying theme of a disillusioning quest where nothing turns out to be as it seems—and even the conclusion on a deserted island with an ambiguous meeting between pursuer and pursued—is much the same.' And although this was written before *Hell in the Pacific*, its application to that film also is clear. In fact, the governing image which recurs constantly in Boorman's work is that of the island, whether off the Devon coast, the site of a deserted prison in San Francisco bay, or the scene of a wartime encounter in the Pacific. This concrete image is most deeply related to the form of Boorman's work, rather than to the abstract theme of the individual will versus the forces of collectivisation: the island is the symbol of a miniature, necessarily simplified world, a place where the complex and chaotic nature of the real world (too complex and chaotic now for any mere holding-up of mirrors) can be reduced to a more manageable scale. But, surrounded by the sea on all sides, the island also recalls in its closed nature the prison and the inevitable recapture of the individual who tries to break out of the circle.

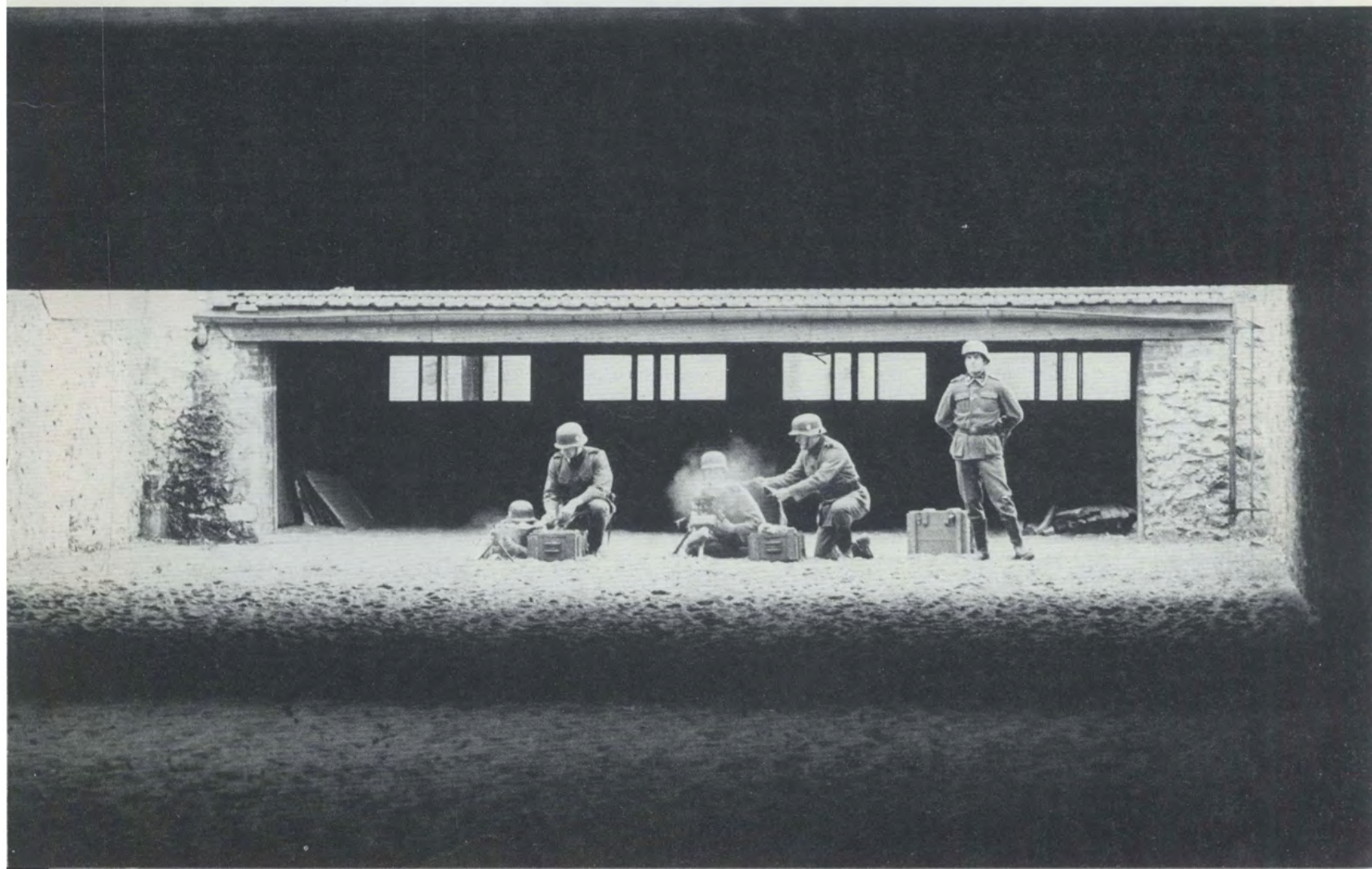
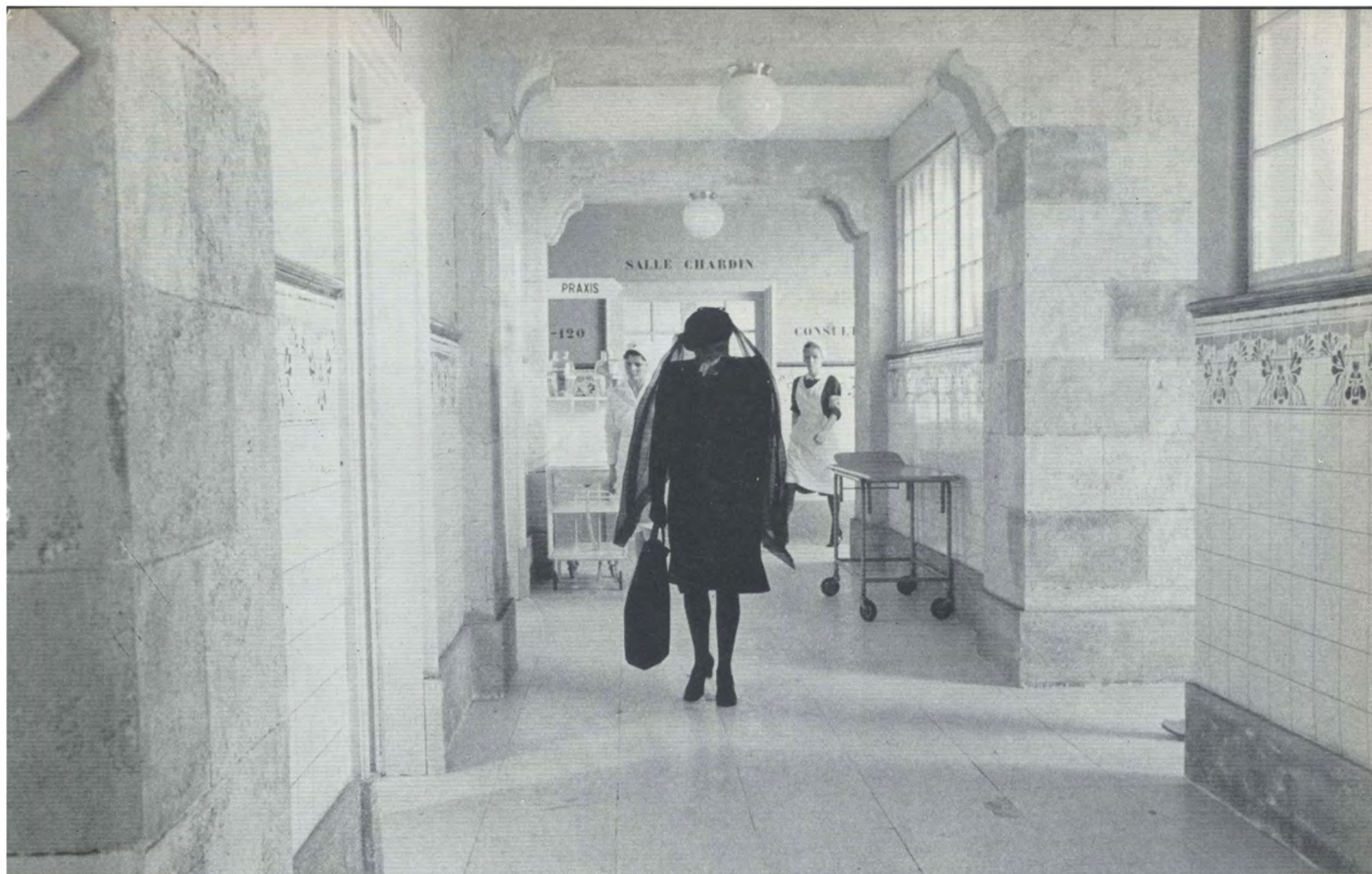
At their deepest levels, *Catch Us If You Can*, *Point Blank* and *Hell in the Pacific* have their core of meaning in this image. How (or whether) it will appear and function from now on in Boorman's work (in *Leo the Last*, with its London locations, for example, or in a more distant project, the film version of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*) remains to be seen; and seen after the solid achievement of that previous work with our very best attention.



Jean-Pierre Melville's new film about
Resistance and Occupation in France.
With Lino Ventura, Paul Meurisse,
Simone Signoret, Serge Reggiani.

L'ARMÉE DES OMBRES





In search of Sherlock



John Gillett

NOW DON'T ASK ME why I'm making a film about Sherlock Holmes, like all the people who've visited me. The answer is, I love him, and I wanted to.' Thus spake Billy Wilder, relaxing for a moment at Pinewood between set-ups for *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, a multi-million dollar Mirisch production for United Artists which marks Wilder's first encounter with British studios and the 128th film featuring Holmes. My first step was to try to discover which aspects of this private life had inspired Wilder and his perennial script collaborator I. A. L. Diamond. The publicity handouts were deliberately vague: no Conan Doyle material was being used, the four episodes making up the 2½ hours running time were original and concerned some hitherto 'undisclosed' adventures written by Watson but never made public because of their rather personal nature.

Approaching Mr. Diamond (who is also associate producer), slumped in his chair with script on knee and occasionally smoking and chewing gum at the same time, I ventured to ask for more details. 'You may ask,' he replied sweetly, and then changed the conversation to an appraisal of the actors and the sets. Fair enough, especially when he

added later that writers nowadays are particularly apprehensive about having ideas purloined by television series. And this Wilder/Diamond script (light-toned yet barbed as one might expect) was being closely adhered to by all concerned, especially Mr. Diamond, who could often be seen mouthing the words with the actors and, on occasion, quietly correcting them. Most of the time, though, he merged into the background, intent and silent.

Diamond's reserve is perhaps a useful foil to Wilder's ebullience. Bustling around in white tennis shoes, small brown hat and overcoat, with cigarette lolling, he never lets up for a moment, rapping out directions and jokes ('mind that hole, we want to see you tomorrow'), looking the complete professional and perfectionist, and clearly idolised by his Holmes (Robert Stephens), Watson (Colin Blakely) and Genevieve Page, flouncing proudly in her beautiful Victorian gowns as Gabrielle Valladon, a mysterious Belgian lady in search of a missing husband. Thanks to United Artists, I was able to visit the unit both in Scotland and at Pinewood.

The first surprise is the sight of a very convincing Loch Ness monster (designed by special effects man Wally Veevers) being towed along for tests in

the loch on a bright sunny day. No one will explain how he fits into the narrative, but then, no one seems particularly surprised that he does. Later that night, I join the unit on location at Castle Urquhart, near Inverness. A ruined pile overlooking the water, it is now transformed by lights, set deco-

BILLY WILDER IN A DOORWAY OF HIS STUDIO BAKER STREET.





"THERE'S A LACK OF ELEGANCE IN THAT SAWING..."

rations and costumed actors into a period setting for a meeting between Queen Victoria (a diminutive actress named Mollie Maureen) and Holmes (Stephens resplendent in full Victorian frock coat). A lengthy red carpet leads down to the castle gate, torches flare on the ramparts, a piper stands at the ready, and the royal procession makes a stately descent. Wilder prints the third take.

A quick change round for a close shot of greetings between Holmes and the Queen's party ('Shall I be reading about your recent exploits?' she asks). Wilder rehearses the dialogue exchanges several times, emphasising to Mollie Maureen (who bears a striking resemblance to Victoria) that she has a soft spot for Holmes. The cold night air is getting into everyone and the Queen keeps fluffing on a particular line until finally she lets out an exasperated 'Oh, sh. . . !' Wilder bounds forward, bows low and says, 'Your Majesty, we heard that!' Eventually they get it right, and we move to a very mysterious exchange between Holmes and his brother Mycroft (a transformed Christopher Lee, seemingly overjoyed to have left Dracula behind for a time), addressing each other by assumed names and then disappearing into a nearby tent.

When Holmes advances up an incline carrying a whisky bottle, Wilder corrects him on movement and delivery—'You're giving it too much of the Macbeths there.' Wilder's ribbing makes it difficult for Holmes to keep a straight face, and just before shooting Wilder grabs my arm, exclaiming, 'Don't you think we've got a touch of Judex here?' (Although Feuillade or Franju may seem curious mentors for Wilder, it is not inconceivable, especially as it appears at this moment to be snowing on one side of the hill and not on the other.) Surveying his now shivering cast and crew from a little mound, Wilder blandly announces, 'It's only our special effects; nothing is going to stop us now except an earthquake.' Having got Holmes and Mycroft into their tent for the last time, we pack up at about 3 a.m., Queen Victoria's coach and horses clatter away over the cobbles, and Wilder bids a curt goodnight ('It's definitely going to be a

movie-movie. I don't think entertainment is a dirty word, do you?').

Back at Pinewood a few weeks later, we have a chance to examine Alexander Trauner's marvellous sets at close quarters, as the unit is waiting to do some additional Scottish scenes on another stage. Out on the lot stands the *pièce de résistance*—150 yards of Baker Street with fully built-up fronts and smaller buildings receding in perspective, shops dressed with authentic Victorian bric-à-brac, real cobbles and some richly beery-looking pubs. The only anachronistic touch is the series of pipes for rain effects protruding over the top. It took four months to build and should be one of the finest achievements ever in film design. Inside the studio, the living room and bedrooms at 221B, even though dark and deserted, demonstrated all one expects from the Wilder-Trauner partnership with their realistic clutter: an extraordinary variety of sporting prints, Indian Army photographs in Watson's room, and some particularly charming ivory elephants, as well as everything else Conan Doyle described with such precision.



HOLMES ON A TANDEM: COLIN BLAKELY, GENEVIEVE PAGE, ROBERT STEPHENS.

The customary studio banging leads us to another spot where technicians are putting the finishing touches to a tiny set of a warehouse interior with a square grilled opening at the right hand corner. Perched precariously on a rostrum behind are Holmes, Watson and Madame Valladon. Holmes' problem here is to saw through the grill with a knife and jump inside on to a mattress placed underneath. Watson hands him hammer and chisel, and much imitation sawing ensues. Wilder sits looking up at them, occasionally waving a handkerchief to point an expression in a certain direction. The sawing is either too slow or too fast, and Wilder encourages Holmes with a quick shout, 'Come on, there's brain and muscle there—make it seem difficult.'

Three takes and it is still not coming

('There's a lack of elegance in that sawing'). By this time all three players are shaking a bit, Wilder's exhortations proliferate, and then he takes a lone walk round the floor while the bars are being adjusted. Now, finally, everything seems set, and Holmes responds with the most fervent sawing yet. The bars give way, he slowly pushes the grill open and jumps through on to the mattress. Wilder nods OK, checks with the lighting cameraman (Christopher Challis) that the brief track forward at the end of the shot worked, and they wrap it up for the afternoon.

Apart from the feeling of being among an unusually well-integrated and happy unit ('The best I've ever worked with, and I mean it'), I also sensed a quality of confidence which seems the prerogative of Wilder's generation. And not just in the subject at hand, but cinema in general—'There's a new, marvellous audience in America, a real feeling between filmmaker and spectator.' He was, of course, referring to the commercial cinema—

reference to the underground scene brought forth a decidedly negative response. Nothing succeeds like success: he tends to regard *Kiss Me, Stupid* as a failure (mistakenly, I feel) because it lost money, but he has few regrets about the past. 'It's nice that you people arranged a retrospective of my old movies, but why not talk about the present and the future as well?'

On the floor, Wilder communicates his thinking with his hands as much as his voice. Diamond hardly puts the script down, but Wilder moves freely, seemingly carrying each scene in his head. And he keeps his secrets well: my request for a clue to the climax of this particular Holmesian 'game' was answered by a knowing grin and nudge: 'Wait and see—we've just filled in what Conan Doyle left out.'

Claire Johnston and Jan Dawson



DECLARATIONS

**OF • IN
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THERE HAS BEEN a lot of loose journalistic talk about the existence of an 'underground' film movement in England today, and this article began as an attempt to define the term and to discover how far an indigenous movement—anarchistic, avant-garde, or both—actually existed. But it rapidly became apparent that while America's rigid film licensing laws had originally involved experimental film-makers there in various subterranean or semi-clandestine activities, the fact that uncensored films could legally be shown to club audiences in this country reduced the term 'underground' to an imported cliché, indiscriminately applied to the whole spectrum of independent film-making activities. These range from essentially professional and relatively high-budget productions (like Maurice Hatton's *Praise Marx* . . . , made with full-size, union crews), to documentary cine-tracts designed to focus immediate attention on a particular social or political problem, to 8 mm. abstract films intended to form part of a mixed media experiment in total environment.

For though it is misleading to talk of a unified 'movement' in the English context, it is undoubtedly true that a lot of things have started moving in the last two years. More and more people, groups and individuals alike, are producing their own films outside the structure of the film industry, without commercial backing or a distributor's guarantee (John Llewellyn's *Events*, shown at the 1969 London Festival; Frankie Dymon's *Death May Be Your Santa Claus*; *The Fall* by Peter Whitehead; Peter Sykes' *The Committee*; Don Levy's *Herostratus*). Some of them aspire to professionalism in the established sense but find themselves frustrated by the limited opportunities that a closed industry can offer them. For some, the dissatisfaction has a wider and more ideological basis, and they have no desire either to work within an industry whose structure reflects the values of a capitalist society they despise or to produce pictures acceptable as entertainment to the audiences already conditioned by that industry and that society. Others are simply fascinated by the unexplored physical possibilities of film itself and are experimenting with it in much the same way that painters experiment with paints or a poet with words.

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But having made their films, all independent film-makers are faced to some degree with the problem of creating, or minimally of locating, their audience; and here again the range of improvised solutions is wide. At one extreme there is an attempt to create something approaching a nationwide circuit, modelled on the two commercial ones that already exist but allowing a greater flexibility of programming. At the other, there is the solution of the purely subjective film-maker, content to sell his film, as artists have traditionally sold their canvases, to the private collector, and looking forward to the cinema's equivalent of the paperback revolution, when 8 mm. copies of his works can be mass produced and sold over shop counters. Somewhere in the middle sits the rapidly proliferating phenomenon of the film club, though this too can be anything from a repertory art cinema unimpeded by censorship problems to a community centre where film screenings are integrated into a wide programme of activities, and film-makers may present their work in person and be available for discussions with their audiences afterwards. Indeed, just as they object to the conventional distinction between 'culture' and society, many young directors object to the notion of a distributor, viewed as an economically motivated middleman, and prefer to retain both control over their films and personal contact with their audiences.

These audiences tend to be young, intellectual and/or middle-class: partly because of the nature of the films themselves; partly because they have so far been found primarily in university film societies or university towns; and partly because many screening facilities are at present only available at unconventional hours unlikely to fit in with a 9-to-5 working schedule. But while young audiences with less preconceived

notions of what constitutes a 'good film' are proving receptive to innovations and experiments, the same can seldom be said of experienced critics who, if they write at all about independent films, tend to apply to them the same criteria as to ordinary entertainment films and so to find them wanting.

Of course, even judged by their own criteria, there are some profoundly uninteresting independent films. And it is also true that some of the new film-makers prefer to boycott the critic (at least in his present, detached incarnation) as being yet another middleman, and to try to reach an objective assessment of their films through the process of a dialogue with their audience. But if one assumes that the serious critic is allied to the film-maker both by a mutual love of the medium and by a desire to see it grow (technically and artistically) and to have its growth understood; if one further assumes that the kind of interaction between critic and creator that spawned the French *nouvelle vague* is both possible and desirable here, and that the existence of several self-absorbed and fragmented sub-cultures, indifferent to and ignorant of one another's existence, is not an ideal state of things, it follows that criticism, like film production, should now undergo a rigid process of redefinition and self-scrutiny.

It is for this reason that we have appended some conclusions about the need for an expanded criticism (corresponding to the expanded cinema) to these general notes about recent innovations and their structures; we hope to follow these up in the next SIGHT AND SOUND with a critical analysis of some of the films in question. The notes themselves are empirical and incomplete, based on information that was available to us in London. We would welcome additional information about what's happening elsewhere.

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Although still at an embryonic stage, the work of the LONDON FILM-MAKERS' CO-OPERATIVE and of political groups (like NEWSREEL and CINEMA ACTION) suggests the possible emergence of a revolutionary project in this country, on the lines of activity at present going on in America. The potential situation is a dialectical one—a movement between two poles: the largely expressive mode of the Film-Makers' Co-operative Movement; and the activist mode of the political groups. The first gives emphasis to the development of a revolutionary style, the second to exploring a programme of issues.

The Co-op movement identifies very strongly with the avant-garde, its work illustrating a non-industrial type of film-making, experimentation and individual enquiry. The New York Co-operative was founded in the early 1960s by a group of such film-makers, spearheaded by Jonas Mekas, who found commercial distributors unwilling to handle their work. The basic idea was that any profits should go to the film-maker, the Co-op taking only a minimal percentage to cover its costs; and since then the structure of the Co-operatives has become the platform for the avant-garde. The movement gradually spread to Europe but had until quite recently little impact in Britain. The LONDON FILM-MAKERS' CO-OPERATIVE was formed three years ago but achieved little in its first year other than the setting up of a small distribution library and the establishing of its own magazine, *Cinim*. However, the International Experimental Film Festival held at Knokke-le-Zoute in 1967 and, to some extent, the American Underground Exhibition—organised by the New York Co-operative in conjunction with the Swedish Film Institute—which toured Europe at about the same time, resulted in an increasing interest in the movement in this country.

Since 1967, the Co-op has expanded rapidly, concentrating initially on creating a climate of opinion favourable to its aims. A programme of Underground films was shown at the National Film Theatre and later toured the Universities. Programmes of Co-operative films have become a regular feature at the New Cinema Club. The London Co-op now has over 200 films in its distribution catalogue, including the work of the better known American film-makers such as Kubelka, Vanderbeek, Rice, Brakhage and de Hirsch. Its success can be measured by the fact that the Edinburgh Festival saw fit to devote a sizeable proportion of its viewing hours to films from the Co-op.

As far as actual film-making is concerned, there has been considerably less activity, though two film-makers working in Britain have contributed significantly to the movement: John Latham (*Speak*) and Steve Dwoskin, an emigré from the New York Co-op who won the Solway prize at Knokke in 1967 and whose films, *Soliloquy*, *Naissant*, *Alone*, *Chinese Checkers*, *Me*, *Myself and I* have received considerable critical recognition. Dwoskin's films are experimental in content rather than form, studies in the extremes of existential isolation which disregard normal notions of privacy. None of them cost more than £100 and all were made with very simple equipment. Dwoskin contrasts the lack of any real sense of community in London with the constant exchange of ideas between film-makers that was a feature of the New York Co-op.

Despite the emergence of some other experimental film-makers (Anthony Scott, whose film *The Longest Most Meaningless Movie in the World* is made up from junk footage found in the dustbins of Wardour Street, and David Larcher, whose film *Mare's Tail* was recently premiered at the NEW ARTS LABORATORY), there seems generally to be little hope that the London Co-op will ever be as financially viable as any of the American ones, both because it is unable to charge as much for its films and because the English film society network which it uses cannot compare with its American counterpart, the campus circuit. Some film-makers in New York, such as George and Mike Kuchar, actually manage to live from the money they make on their films. Dwoskin (who teaches graphics for a living) has found that the 60 per cent which he receives from the distribution of his films only covers the cost of making new prints. However, television broadcasts have proved remunerative and a number of European stations are showing interest in experimental films. It is also hoped that the building up of relationships with other co-operatives in Europe will help alleviate financial difficulties.

The London Co-op is now embarking on the second phase of its development, creating workshop and laboratory facilities in conjunction with the New Arts Laboratory, where it now has its premises. The New Arts Laboratory is an attempt to provide equipment and workshop facilities for individual artists while also incorporating some of the activities of the now defunct ARTS LAB, such as seminars, film shows and happenings. The Laboratory hopes to bring about an exchange between the different media, to encourage experiments in theatre, printing, design, etc. as well as in film. Its building has been offered by the London Borough of Camden for a short term at a nominal rent and the Co-op estimate that with their co-operative ownership of workshop and laboratory facilities, their savings will be over 50 per cent. Laboratories have never been particularly sympathetic to the experimental film-maker, preferring bulk orders from television, and they have been known to censor films submitted for processing. At the same time, laboratories here are far more expensive than in America. And in addition the workshop scheme will enable experimental film-makers to explore the medium at the laboratory level.

Although the London Co-op will be running the film workshop at the New Arts Laboratory, it hopes that the move will broaden its field of activity and that film-makers not primarily interested in experiment will also make use of its facilities: one possible way of breaking down the sectarianism and isolation which characterise so much of the film scene in Britain.

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The little work that has so far been done in the political/activist field follows very much in the wake of the American film-making group NEWSREEL, founded some two years ago by political activists rather than film-makers in response to the urgency of the political situation. The movement is basically a reaction against the kind of newsreel material produced by the consumer-oriented media, a co-operative effort by young film-makers to document independently what they regard as relevant national news. A distribution centre has been set up in this country; at present it deals principally with interested University and College film societies, but it hopes to broaden the context in which the films are seen (minimally to include

other film societies) and that eventually the liberal audience will become a radical one.

However, although the Newsreels receive enthusiastic reactions from student audiences in Britain, there seems to be little equivalent film-making activity going on here. Richard Hammerslag's *End of a Tactic*, about the 1968 demonstration in London against the Vietnam war, is the only British Newsreel to emerge so far. Another film which, though made independently, attempts to discuss a political issue in this kind of way is Pat Holland's film on the student revolt at Hornsey College of Art, initially a five-minute filmstrip, now an hour-long dramatisation of the entire art education debate. CINEMA ACTION, the one organised group making political films with the intention of taking them to working-class audiences on the shop-floor, is still very much in the early stages. It also, perhaps judiciously, wishes to discourage premature interest on the part of what it considers to be an Establishment magazine.

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Derek Hill's NEW CINEMA CLUB was inaugurated in October 1967 and is a logical extension of his work as director of the SHORT FILM SERVICE, an agency endeavouring to secure for independent film-makers the most advantageous distribution deals or TV sales possible. Besides the number of films (several of them from the American underground) on the SFS books for which no commercial outlet could be found, the Club was inspired, says Hill, by the number of worthwhile films not coming into this country and therefore not being seen at all. Its programmes are eclectic, including almost anything new that is unable to obtain a commercial screening, either because of timidity on the part of censors or distributors, or just because—like the recent evening of participation cinema organised by John and Yoko—they don't fit with established ideas of what should go on in a cinema.

Many of its selections come from foreign film festivals, where they were neglected by British buyers, and the Club hopes that by familiarising its audiences with the works of such directors as Borowczyk, Pavlovic and Petrovic, it will also encourage distributors to gamble on their subsequent works and make them available to a wider audience than the Club itself can do. In this respect Derek Hill continues—where censorship permits—to function not as an alternative to a distributor but as an agent for the independent film-maker in his dealings with existing distribution outlets. After repeated showings at the NCC, Allan King's *Warrendale* was finally purchased by television, Makavejev's *Switchboard Operator* by a commercial distributor and given a public run in London.

Although advertising the Club as a 'continuous London Festival', Hill is in fact critical of the Festival, which in his opinion is not sufficiently experimental and shows too many films by established directors. He also sees himself implementing the aims of the National Film Theatre, which he feels has in recent years concentrated too much on retrospectives and films of historical interest at the expense of new developments.

The Club's activities are at present restricted by its lack of premises (its screenings are held, two or three times a week, in various theatres as well as the NFT and the ICA cinema at Nash House), and of course Hill eventually hopes to open his own cinema. But even if this hope is realised, he sees little possibility of bringing his revolutionary films to a non-middle-class audience, since he will be continuing to work within the film club structure. And admission prices must be high (8/6 and up) if the film-maker is to receive even a tiny amount from the Club's few screenings of his work.

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Another reaction to the problem of distribution is that of the TATTOOIST group, ten close friends with professional experience in making television films who find the prospects of working within a large revolutionary structure ('all theory and no action') or in isolation equally stultifying, and who handle their own films on a piecemeal, ad hoc basis. Pooling their resources, the group present their short, inexpensive films to the audiences that invite them; invited to show some of their films to an audience in Oxford, they decided instead to produce a film tailor-made for the audience and did so in

three days. The films show less interest in film as a medium than, in McLuhan's phrase, 'the audience as message', and the emphasis is very much on immediacy. Their approach is one of experimentation, and they look forward to the day when people will be able to buy films in cassette form as they now buy long-playing records. Apart from the University circuits, some of their films have been shown at the New Cinema Club.

THE ELECTRIC CINEMA in Notting Hill Gate came into being when John McWilliams approached the owner of the local 'Imperial' and arranged to rent it for three late shows a week. It is not tied to any distributor or group of film-makers, and will in fact show any film that meets the approval of its small administrative committee. Besides its open-door policy (anything from Franju to home movies), its notable features are a mixed media presentation (pop groups playing between films, for instance) and its emphasis on serving the community, both by functioning as a cultural centre that encourages participation as well as spectatorship, and by donating profits, where there are any, to local causes like Release.

In some ways McWilliams' initiative has provided the model for THE OTHER CINEMA (originally PARALLEL CINEMA), an ambitious and professional attempt—still in the embryo stage—to create an alternative distribution circuit. Initiated by a group of film society enthusiasts dissatisfied with the type of films available for shows, and by young film-makers equally dissatisfied with the type of films they are obliged to make within the present system and with the limited outlets for any films they make outside it, it has already contacted about fifty independent cinema managers throughout the country prepared to lease cinemas to the organisation either for regularly scheduled performances or for supplementary late-night screenings.

Concerned with providing an economically as well as artistically viable alternative for the professional film-maker, it considers large scale, inter-regional activity imperative to its success, recognising that one or two showings in fifty different cinemas are preferable to no screenings at all or to an isolated week's run in London. Its emphasis will be primarily on 35 mm., and besides independently produced British features, it hopes to handle short films and foreign films not getting the showings they deserve, and also to act as a central booking agency for independently produced 16 mm. films, which are not affected by existing KRS regulations.

Its attempt to secure the autonomy of the independent film-maker, by ensuring that profits revert to the producers and not to a commercially oriented distributor, could initially restrict the autonomy of the independent cinema owner, since The Other Cinema recognises that it can only hope to secure distribution rights (particularly to foreign films) if it can guarantee the producers an attractive number of screenings. To do this it plans to operate rather like a record club, offering a number of package deals (feature, short, and—where possible—accompanying director) from which cinemas or film societies using the circuit must guarantee to select, say, six out of eight; though it hopes that a more flexible booking system can be introduced for film societies along with the package deal. The ICA cinema will probably function as its London outlet (but will also continue to show non-circuit films), and the hope is that the type of film recently shown there (*Le Gai Savoir*, *Artistes at the Top of the Big Top: Disorientated*) will be available to a nationwide audience (initially a young one, free to attend late night screenings in university towns). But the immediate problem is one of finance: of raising money to launch operations and of finding producers prepared to accept payment for their films on a strictly percentage basis.

Activities are scheduled to begin early in 1970, and if the circuit can compete economically with the two existing ones, several prominent film-makers (Finney, Losey) have intimated that they will make films for it. The if is a big one. The Other Cinema (described as the 'stuff that dreams and Free Cinema are made of') is a genuine and pragmatic attempt to restore the autonomy of the British cinema and to increase the number of international films in distribution. How far its aesthetic standards are compatible with its need to make



SCENES FROM PAT HOLLAND'S "THE HORNSEY FILM"

money (to finance the independent producers it aims to serve) remains to be seen. As does the wisdom of fighting the circuit system with a sort of supplementary circuit. In any case, the changes it envisages seem to be qualitative rather than structural. Meanwhile a miniature circuit, POLIT KINO, just being launched by Andi Engel, has acquired Straub's two features and two shorts, a long documentary by Mireille Dansereau and two other independent shorts. As the name implies, the emphasis will be political. Three package programmes are now available and Engel hopes to reach a total of ten.

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The little that has been written about underground films in established magazines has tended to be fairly dismissive. In America, the major platform for criticism of this kind has been Jonas Mekas' column in *Village Voice*, and his polemics for the underground cause have done more than anything else to create interest in the movement there. However, much of the criticism in the magazine *Film Culture*, around which the



movement is centred, is subjective to the point of mystification. As far as this country is concerned, the magazine *Cinema* divides its coverage between a discussion of the popular cinema and the underground, and in a recent article Tony Rayns has attempted to analyse the work of Kenneth Anger in terms of his thematic preoccupations and use of signs. And the Co-op magazine *Cinim* has attempted to broaden its platform, covering topics like semiology and politics. There is a danger, nevertheless, that criticism of underground films can itself become an underground activity, and one in which the need to interpret the films at any level is dispensed with.

It is not the intention of this article to give any critical evaluation of the work being done in the sphere of independent film-making that might traditionally be termed the authentic underground; that is, in the avant-garde movement or in the political movement. However, these films clearly pose problems for the critic if he is to attempt to approach them in any satisfactory way. The emergence of these kinds of film simply demonstrates once again the inadequacy of the haphazard, subjective critical approach, depending for its criteria on personal taste, which dominates the Anglo-Saxon critical tradition; a tradition which has not, as yet, fully come to terms with the problem of the popular cinema, let alone the underground film. Clearly, film criticism can no longer be seen as an entirely separate field of endeavour, divorced from other art forms.

The experimental film often has much more in common with abstract art than it does with the industrial cinema; indeed, many avant-garde film-makers were originally painters, designers or sculptors, and see film as an extension of their work in other fields. Most of these film-makers are unconcerned with the narrative aspect of the cinema, and yet film critics still attempt to look at their work on the level of discourse. Political films pose entirely different problems: obviously the aesthetic intention of the film-maker is a secondary consideration, the primary consideration being to get information across to the audience. The rhetorical nature of many of the American documentaries has led to a new kind of symbolic documentary which expresses group feeling and loyalty rather than an individual point of view. In order to look at these films the critic would have to examine how they

actually work in propagandist terms and the level of meaning which the film-maker is using.

Any attempt to decode the language of underground film-makers must also obviously take into account the latent value-system of the underground movement itself. In their manifest intentions and preoccupations, the avant-garde and the politically activist poles of the underground have little in common; indeed, both groups are generally unsympathetic to each other's activities. There appears to be little movement of film-makers between the two poles, suggesting that they are two entirely separate modes of revolutionary activity. As the potential situation in Britain appears to be following the American pattern, it might be useful to look at the situation there. The Beat Generation of the 1950s were largely poets and writers working within a context of political complacency. Nevertheless, despite the fact that they lacked political commitment and were primarily concerned with expressing distaste for the dominant moral values of middle-class American society, they succeeded in paving the way for the radicalism and militancy which were to follow, in the Civil Rights movement. It seems short-sighted simply to dismiss the avant-garde, which appears to be serving a similar function, as being uncommitted and withdrawing from society into an esoteric enclave. Even without much conscious intention, they are significantly contributing to a revolutionary style. The avant-garde, in its attempt to live through the alternatives to the existing order and in its questioning of the social consciousness, reminds the activists that power must not simply be contested in society, but also within the individual consciousness. The situation, then, is dialectical rather than conflicting.

In the final analysis, the success or failure of any revolutionary project of this kind depends on the level of creativity within the country. At the present time it seems low here as compared with other countries. This is always attributed to the isolation and narrow professionalism of the British film-maker. However, this could be regarded as a symptom rather than a cause. The real cause is the cultural climate itself, which in turn determines the level of creativity. It is the task of critics to attempt to create a climate conducive to creativity, and this can only be achieved through a constant dialogue between critics, film-makers and spectators/participants.

JOHN LLEWELLYN'S "EVENTS"



reaching THE tribes

Axel Madsen

AND SO THE SIXTIES ended with neither bang nor whimper but with promises of shimmering horizons. The Seventies, blushingly innocent ahead of us, could belong to American cinema as the Sixties now so clearly were Europe's, mainly perhaps because the thrust of this baffling century somehow is American and because, in the movies, the good guys are winning.

Increasingly, the question is not that binary polarisation, fringe versus establishment, above versus underground, that went with the decade of heuristics and conscience-cleaving war (even hawks, let alone parrots, learned to deplore Vietnam). Rather, it seems, filmic relevance is a matter of texture, appeal and honesty.

But the war, *our* war, is over. Apart from inevitable rearguard skirmishes, the victory was complete and the movies may now be added to the Young Man's Burden. The generation groundswell (and its built-in youth cult as product) didn't so much drown the golden calf as nonchalantly stride into the bastion that a bunch of Parisian movie buffs, writing in a canary-coloured magazine in the late Fifties, dreamt of turning into the century's mind-blowing art form. What is also important about *Alice's Restaurant* is that Arthur Penn made it with the best of the two worlds—the 'new' individuality and the rationality of the 'system'—and that these worlds are becoming one.

If what the young are saying is that they don't want to lead trivial lives and that the post-industrial era must be one where men set to work out their relations with one another, it is clear that movies—less prime mover than reflective art despite the *Cahiers du Cinéma* postulates of a decade ago—must learn to become significant and humanistic.

But, again, the fight against the 'dream peddlers' has been won. Studio bosses feel obliged to pay more than lip service to the 'counter-culture'. One of the sights of Hollywood last fall was London's own Beautiful People member 29-year-old Michael Sarne, long-haired and in full Chelsea gear, commanding Mae West, 76, *et al.* in Fox's *Myra Breckinridge* into artistic bedlam the

likes of which Glamourland hadn't seen since the Ernst Lubitsch generation of *Lumpenkünstler* hit town half a century ago. Up San Francisco way, Stuart Hagmann, 28, was blowing M-G-M money on *The Strawberry Statement*, the now 21-year-old James Kunen's novel, subtitled 'Notes of a College Revolutionary', while over in Burbank, George Lucas, 25, was editing *TXH 1138* for producer Francis Ford Coppola and Warner Brothers. (It should be interesting to see if Lucas can use the considerable talents of Donald Pleasence in any other way than for screen villainy.) Belatedly, but forcefully, the message is getting across that one out of every two Americans (Canadians, Germans, Frenchmen, Mexicans, etc.) is under 25, and, more important, that youth is openly displaying its strength, appeal and power. Having lost the 'other' half—at least in affluent society—movies must now forcefully reflect the hungers, hurts and needs of this junior half of the population.

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Ringing slogans are made around over-simplifications. The success of *Alice's Restaurant* is no mean tribute to that sophistication of audiences which everybody is in the habit of paying lip service to, but rarely dares to put on the screen.

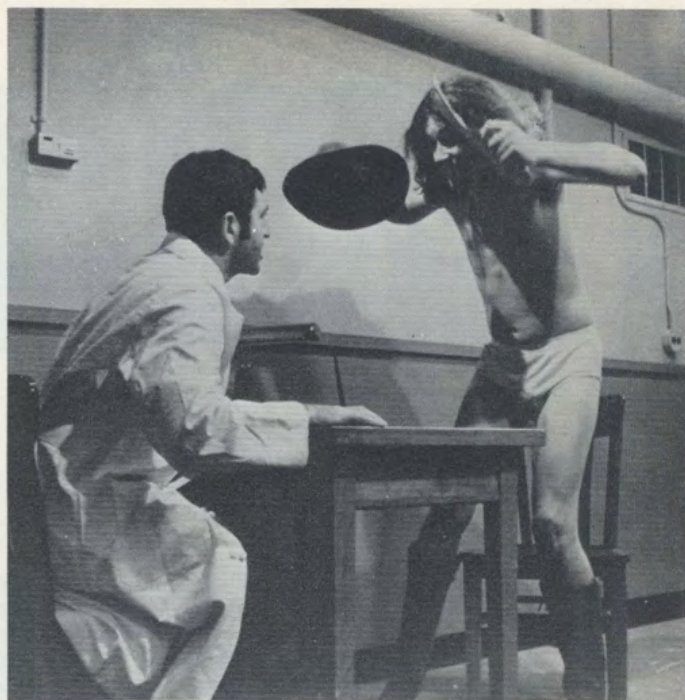
Penn is a responder to influences, and once told me the most important function of movies, their very essence, is the number of bells of recognition they ring in their audiences' conscience. In bringing Arlo Guthrie's now famous ballad to the screen, Penn has made the first significant film about Vietnam. For those who have lived the length of this war in America, *Alice's Restaurant* is Vietnam on the home front. Suddenly we realise that the war is neither the Duke's *Green Berets* nor the well-meaning *Loin du Vietnam*, and other quotations from Brecht, Marx and Lenin repeated with sincerity and indignation. Instead, it is Arlo's red VW Microbus weaving in and out of a military column, the young black veteran wearing a hook for a hand, and the very fact that the film has no punch lines. It is the texture itself of the movie,

its unspecific apprehension, its dead spots and slight narrative, its hilarious, deeply pessimistic vision.

Alice's Restaurant reflects better youth's suspicion of institutions and weariness of organisation, its yearning for community, than do the obviously more commercially successful *Midnight Cowboy* and *Easy Rider*. John Schlesinger's adaptation of James Leo Herlihy's novel is essentially a fascinating piece of American baroque that a clever foreigner would make (without linguistic barriers, one feels Louis Malle would have transposed the story to the screen in much the same way); and, like all actors' films, *Easy Rider* is too much narcissism.

In 1969, these sagas of the Lower Depth, on which the cinema has always thrived, were important—as anguished cries for personal authenticity and as portraits of a society reduced to an ugly and intolerant defence of what it takes to be the status quo. Various commentators have seen 'trends' and 'break-throughs' in the unorthodox financing of *Easy Rider* and of Haskell Wexler's *Medium Cool*. *Rider* was paid for by Bert Schneider, who sold it to Columbia after the fact; *Cool* by the wealthy Wexler brothers themselves; and in November, Hopper started *The Last Movie* with outside money, albeit with a Universal release. I fail to see any significance in this. Rational financing, decent promotion and general release always await newcomers who are successful at the box-office.

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Bigger shake-ups seem to be around the corner. We can take it for granted that the weeding out of second and third rate talent is continuous and, hence, that an early 1970s equivalent to the New Wave cut-down must be coming. Over 150 New Wavers made their first films in France between 1960 and 1963, and seven years later, less than a handful are around. Curiously enough the original musketeers are still with us, although Jean-Luc Godard may not mutate into the new decade and Claude Chabrol seems definitely settled in an intelligent '*cinéma de consommation*'.



Left: Noel Black's "Run, Shadow, Run".
 Above: Arlo Guthrie in "Alice's Restaurant".
 Below: Camera and reflections in
 Haskell Wexler's "Medium Cool".



Cinéastes are like green salads, highly perishable (has *any* film-maker ever been significant for more than ten years?), and the fact that the top directors in America today—Penn, Sam Peckinpah, Mike Nichols and the on-rushing Englishmen from Sarne to Peter Yates—were unheard of a decade ago carries its own irony.

But if a cinéaste's relevance is fleeting, so is subject material. Without resorting to the Maoists' *tabula rasa*, it seems that a lot of fads, hang-ups and plain anachronisms must go. How many *Battle of Britain*, *Paint Your Wagon*, *Hello Dolly* and *Darling Lili* perennials can we take? It is painful to see Stanley Kubrick entomb himself in a Napoleonic epic and Nichols splurge untold man-hours and millions on yet another World War II satire, *Catch 22*. How many beatings will this death-wishing industry take (Fox, for instance, has a good 35 million dollars invested in the coming *Tora, Tora, Tora* and *Patton*) before it learns that the 1939-45 conflict can raise little empathy in present-day spectators since these audiences weren't born when that war was fought? The WWII affliction is by no means exclusively Anglo-American, although the number of Yugoslav, Czech and other national renderings of bad Teutons, good partisans, absurdity and/or manhood-through-the-crucible-of-combat seems to be decreasing.

Of late, sex on the screen has become almost as offensive as ancient war. It would seem, however, that on-screen sex cannot go much further since, as Luc Moullet so sensibly put it in his *Cahiers* review of Cannes '69 pornography, in filming coitus 'cameramen have at their disposal infinitely fewer positions than have actors.' Although trading on the frontier of residual puritanism surely will be with us for a while longer, its limits must be near when, according to *De Sade*, the Marquis' most notable contribution to esoteric eroticism was spreading strawberry jam on women's nipples.

The Film-maker as Ascendant Star, as *Time* entitled a mid-1969 survey, is a reality, and the horizons are promising if he can continue to carve out new freedoms and, first of all, reach the tribes.

The Aquarian age is all-pervasive of music and spontaneous community; it is intensive and visionary. Its music is not a particular form of rock, but an anthem of revolution, and the 'getting together' is more than Bohemian hedonism and bourgeois freakout. The event of 1969 was the rock festivals, and the message of these gentle yet profoundly subversive happenings was not lost to the over-30 generation. The festivals brought to the surface a largely inner-directed style of life, uncontrolled by elders, and they

gave to thousands who previously had thought of themselves as part of an isolated minority the euphoric sense of discovering that they are, as the saying goes, what's happening. In these tribal feasts, however, the cinema is the big dropout. Yet, the cinema is the most Aquarian of all arts.

Since Griffith, Eisenstein and the silent theoreticians, we have proclaimed film's superiority over other art forms, essentially because movies can speak to the heart as much as to the mind. We have marvelled at movies' ability to paint souls and moods and have said that, like music, cinema perception is volatile, subjective and, at exalted moments, contrapuntal. We have manipulated celluloid to create Proustian reverberations and negative dimensions, we have seen the foremost of our makers establish that film has no absolute principle or technical limit. And here, all of a sudden, comes a generation in flight from Euclidean reason toward exaltation of the self, Dionysian anarchism, and the electrically amplified 'now'.

This generation states that it can afford to reject materialism because it takes abundance for granted, that the aims of industrial society are no longer satisfying; indeed, that the oppressiveness of industrial society is psychological and that salvation lies in the inner sanctuary of the senses, where the young can be in touch with themselves and aware. But as *Easy Rider* and countless basement imitations have shown, filming an LSD trip never works, and reaching the tribes obviously demands that at least as much thought be given to form as to content.

Although most Aquarians don't think in political terms ('It's hard to reach them,' says Abbie Hoffman, 'more and more you have to talk about magic'), contemporary cinema—particularly *engagé* European and Third World expressions—is of course politically sensitised. To capture the outer-directed youth revolt, latter-day *cinéma-vérité* suffices. Whether it is Claude Lelouch in *Vivre pour Vivre* or Wexler in *Medium Cool*, to put an alienated TV cameraman in front of the camera makes for vivid, angry movie-making, especially if the cameraman is planted in front of social upheavals. This is strong, seductive screenfare full of light reflected in shiny surfaces, devastating cityscapes, foul-mouthed close-ups and hand-held riots that in the hands of a real film-maker (cf. Louis Malle's *Calcutta*) can carve very deep and moving portraits.

Wexler shot his ultimately disappointing marriage of documentary reality and theatrical fiction in big, colour 35 mm.; but, ironically, the more 'amateurish' this kind of film-making gets, the better it becomes. *Cinéma-vérité* was invented in 16 mm., and with manufacturers aiming at the volume of the Super 8 market, it is the amateur who first gets the fast lenses and other technological advances. Interesting, if

nothing else, is *My Girlfriend's Wedding*, where Jim McBride's real girl friend, for reasons of a nationality change, goes through a real wedding, smiling, confessing and playing to her boy friend's ever-present camera. This possessive cinema with its emphasis of complicity, indiscretion and playfulness may be borderline amateurism, but the very ambivalence of the 'author's' position behind and in front of his camera opens up new dimensions of film-making *en direct*.

But reaching the tribes is not dabbling with reality, but splashing spiritual values on the screen, and, I would think, following the arduous ways of Michelangelo Antonioni and Ingmar Bergman into the deeper maze of modern sensibility. Here again, *Alice's Restaurant* comes to the forefront.

In making his film, Penn obviously questioned the very foundations of the medium and, on the screen, *Alice* is indeed what *Esquire's* new Jacob Brackman called a film with little precedent in American cinema, and Richard Schickel in *Life* conceded was the New American Movie (his capitalising). The very meandering of the film, its cosy joshing, its vacuous responses, penchant for hyperbole and shifting energy make it a new film. In fact, the picture's flaws appear when it comes nearest to traditional plot and event. To perceive its newness, one has only to eavesdrop on very young moviegoers during a projection: they 'groove' with the picture and understand it perfectly. Seen through their minds, we in turn understand them and their reaction to a lot of movies. Suddenly, Yates' *Bullitt*, to take a very banal example, is back to its own little self of a dressed-up, slick TV yarn.

As the decade closed, Penn was finishing *Little Big Man*, a study of the American Indian—a theme full of war and racial repression that, with *Soldier Blue*, Ralph Nelson was also taking up. Fox was getting ready to release Yates' *John and Mary*, advance-rumoured to be exceptionally beautiful, while Peckinpah was already starting his second picture since *The Wild Bunch*.

With the most fascinating story material in front of their noses, more elbow-room than ever, and with audiences and rewards progressing in quantum jumps, film-makers working in America can look forward to a decade that has no other limitations than themselves. The subtle shift in sensibilities, perception and awareness is bringing film and people closer together and the quarter-century downward slide could be stopped and a true renaissance brought about. If film will continue to explore its own subterranean wealth and find out 'how' to reach out.

But then again, film has always been, 'à ses heures sublimes,' incandescent.



Paul Warshaw

EASY RIDER is a film about the free-wheeling odyssey across America of two pot-head motorcyclists—Wyatt (Peter Fonda) and Billy (Dennis Hopper)—ending in their sudden, seemingly gratuitous murder. It is, at this moment, at once the most modish and predictable, and the most fresh and unexpected of films. It is poor sociology but often very good film-making. In so far as they are interested in showing us what Americans didn't already know about their country, the film-makers might as well have stood in bed in L.A. or New York. The film's 'news' about America is at least five years old. But as an expression of a certain shared feeling about this country, *Easy Rider* is a fragile but lovely lyric poem.

The film's attitudes and ideas fit very snugly into the fashionable thinking of the under-thirty generation. And for those who belong to or sympathise with that generation, and share much of its thinking, the film—tasteful, delicate, sincere and often beautiful—is sure to be very moving. Yet in the cool light of morning, one ought somewhat to resent one's manipulation by the easy partisanship of *Easy Rider*. The characters fall very neatly into Good Guy and Bad Guy categories—only once again the categories have been changed to suit a new filmgoing generation.

On the one hand are the hippies, either sweet, pacific, and unassertive (the inhabitants of the commune), quietly narcissistic (Wyatt), gently ironic (the hitchhiker played by Luke Askew), or volatile, sometimes aggressive, but basically harmless (Billy). Also unmistakably Good are the farmer and his family with whom the two travellers break bread early in their journey, and the most interesting (and best acted) character, the Southern liberal lawyer, George (Jack Nicholson), who—as *The New Yorker* put it—is 'seen as the hippies' natural blood brother'. On the other hand are the Southwestern 'rednecks': bigoted, with hard faces, capable when they are banded together of acting out their bigotry with murder. Recognisable, believable, differentiable but nevertheless anonymous types, they are seen entirely from the outside, from the hippies' standpoint.

At one point, as the cyclists ride past the broken-down homes of Southern blacks, they wave, in a gesture of friendliness and perhaps solidarity, to a black family standing outside a house; and the family waves back. This moment—although sweet and even plausible—can fall easily into the pattern of easy simplification. Taken symbolically, it could be a half-truth: that is, the gesture toward solidarity is still sincerely but

wistfully made, but it is only an impotent gesture, and the solidarity is a long way off. The only other encounter between our heroes and black characters is at the Mardi Gras: again passing gestures, with a more pronounced sense of wistfulness.

I think the film-makers were prudent to stop there both times and not to bring their heroes and their black characters into any other relation than one of passing gestures. If they had brought them closer together, they would either have had to lie outright (and to judge by the sincerity of their film, they are incapable of outright lying) or they would have had a great deal more on their hands. If they had undertaken this—and had succeeded in dealing with it honestly and well—they would have had an immeasurably more complex, more contradictory film, less popular but more truthful and more solid than the slender, sincere, lovely but undaring film they did make.

The film, after all, professes in some sense to tell us 'the truth' about America; and one of the large 'truths' it explicitly tells us—indeed its governing idea—is that the rednecks hate, fear, and will even murder the hippies for what they 'represent'; and what they represent is 'free-

dom'. Yet to black people they would represent freedom in an even more emphatic way—the simple freedom that comes with being white in America, and its concomitant health, leisure, and affluence (their Harley-Davidsons, their luxuriant dress). If our heroes actually stopped by any of these black homes, or found themselves in a black ghetto in the same way they find themselves in, as it were, a 'redneck ghetto', they would be received (depending upon the age and sophistication of the Negroes there) with fear disguised as servility, bewilderment, embarrassment, or outright hostility—in some cases even murder. In very few would they be given a feeling of friendliness or solidarity. (There is one concise statement about the social inequality of the races, about the advantages of being white, when George tells Wyatt and Billy that he can get them out of jail if they haven't murdered anyone, 'at least nobody white'.)

Thus, although the film, with its voyage of discovery, sets out to tell us 'the truth' about America, it fails to tell us 'the whole truth', in fact it notably evades doing so. Yet it comes remarkably close to telling us 'nothing but the truth': that is, what the film does show is plausible and real, and is told in a way which is controlled, unexaggerated, and unhysterical.

The film's quality of truthfulness is a small triumph of style. It is not that the

style is remarkable in any obvious way: even at its best it is not, and it is very uneven. But at this point in time it is remarkable by its very unremarkableness, by its very modesty. Over ten years ago, after attacking most of the current Broadway productions, Mary McCarthy praised several off-Broadway productions, in part because 'the actors are too young and inexperienced to have learned to act really badly'. It is somewhat in this sense that *Easy Rider's* direction, acting, editing, etc., are remarkable: they do not fall into so many of the fashionable, predictable traps. Yet Mary McCarthy's remark has a snideness which I don't mean entirely to carry over. The film's modesty, taste, and control are positive virtues.

What are the traps which Dennis Hopper's direction avoids? The purely technical side of film has always had an attraction of its own. Film directors have always pursued technical innovations—or have immediately appropriated those of other directors—often with an eagerness and confidence that seemed to assume that the content of film would automatically be extended, and the art of film automatically furthered, by advancing its mechanics. Technical innovations have abounded in recent years,* and with some of the best directors, like Resnais (as with the best directors of the

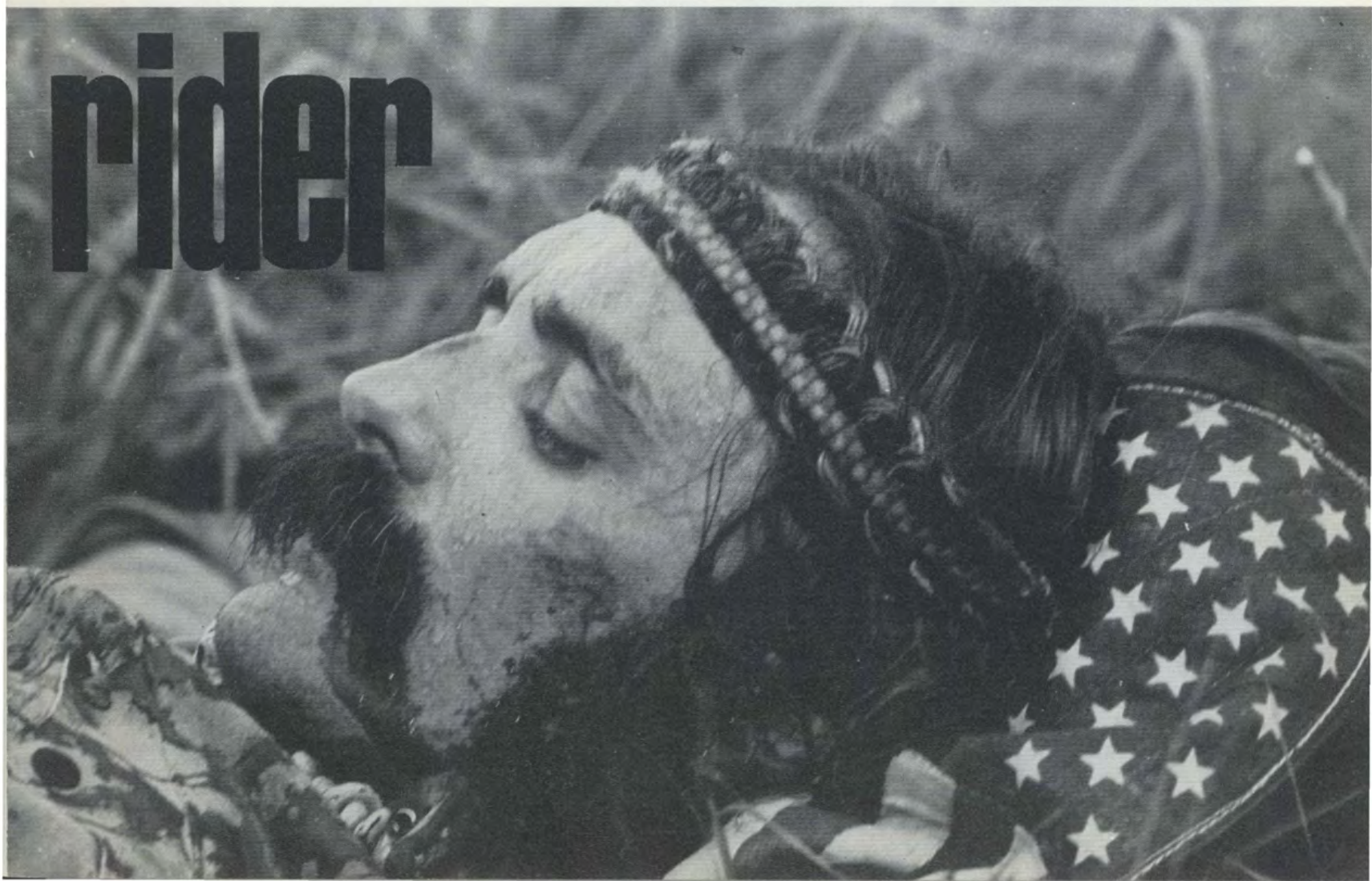
past), they have gone hand-in-hand with a genuine and largely successful attempt to say things which could not have been said in the old ways. But other filmmakers often follow on their heels with a kind of desperate slavishness. They seem compelled to use all the new techniques, indeed to use them all at once, as though they had to *prove* they were making a film by making it do everything that a film can do—everything that Eisenstein or Welles or Resnais or Godard had shown could be done. Otherwise their film would not be 'cinematic'. (It is as though, because *Ulysses* had already been written, Katherine Anne Porter could not have permitted herself the simple narrative prose of *Noon Wine*.)

The rapid flashbacks and thought-images of *Marienbad* permanently extended the possibilities of film. Yet other directors seemed to have copied the film without really knowing why. *Muriel* introduced a new, more extreme

**Easy Rider* has its own noticeable innovation (in a sense a proposed new form of punctuation): a way of making the transition between one scene and the next by cutting back and forth a couple of times between the two scenes. At the moment—inevitably—it appears self-conscious. It is impossible to say whether it will die immediately, or whether other directors will take it over and it will become a viable substitute for the dissolve.

"EASY RIDER": DENNIS HOPPER.

Easy Rider



form of fragmentation to the cinema. Yet since that film, directors have often seemed to fragment their films without sufficient reason, or to do so—in films without the underlying coherence of *Muriel*—as a kind of alibi or camouflage for the film's lack of coherence. The jigsaw puzzle of *Muriel* is genuine: when we put it together we get a whole Hélène, a whole Bernard, a whole Boulogne-sur-Mer—and a whole drama among real characters in a real place. In an atrocity like *Castle Keep*, something horribly misshapen is fragmented, and the fragmentation is used to conceal its misshapeness.

And so we have scenes in films, or whole films, which over-extend themselves, which are over-complicated by a proliferation of techniques. Basically simple dramatic scenes are so fragmented, or so overloaded with flashbacks or symbols or odd camera angles or unusual lighting, or edited in a way characterised



"EASY RIDER": PETER FONDA.

by such obtrusive juxtapositions or rhythm, that their wholeness, their integrity as drama, and their force are lost. Along the way, the distinction between montage sequences and simple dramatic sequences is erased or fuzzed over. Often this has to do with genuine advances—for instance, with the development of various kinds of subjective, anti-realist cinema—but just as often it has more to do with fashion, and the innovations are unnecessary and detrimental.

Many sections of *Easy Rider* could be considered montage sequences rather than dramatic sequences: they dramatise the 'inner life' of their characters (as in the acid trip which, although not really integrated into the film, is still better than any other acid trip I've seen in a movie) or they are concerned with suggesting generalised action over generalised time (as in the sequences, with accompanying songs, of motorcycle travelling: most of these are beautiful). Even these sequences are kept relatively simple. But most important, when a scene is dramatic, it is clearly and cleanly so. The scene in which Wyatt, Billy and George are forced to leave a local diner by the hostile remarks

of the natives is among the few solid, effective, realistic scenes in recent films, simply because Hopper does not allow his technique—the acting, lighting, camerawork, or editing—to obtrude. He does not interfere with his people and his action; he lets them be.

Thus the treatment of even this tense scene is characterised by a modest respect for life lived which is rare in American films. And the same thing could be said of many other scenes: the sweet, loving treatment of the hippies of the commune (as in the single shot which pans in a full circle, simply showing everyone there); or the night scene in which George, Billy and Wyatt (a few hours before George will be murdered) sit by their sleeping bags, high on pot, and converse in a slow reverie. The understatedness of this scene (particularly of Nicholson's beautiful, controlled acting) almost succeeds in mitigating the pretentiousness of some of the dialogue, such as the remark that the rednecks hate and fear the hippies for what they represent—a half-truism which almost certainly was intended (at some point, by at least one of the three scriptwriters, Fonda, Hopper and Terry Southern) to bear much of the weight of the entire film.

The weak point of the film is Peter Fonda's self-conscious, narcissistic performance, and although some viewers have defended Fonda by saying that he's supposed to be playing just that sort of vacuous-seeming pothead, this defence can only go so far. Fonda, although often a pleasing presence, is a poor actor. He says his lines, even those which are obviously meant to be heartfelt and sincere, in such a way that they sound like put-ons or outright sarcasm. The film also uses certain symbols (as in the close-up of the watch discarded by Wyatt at the start of the journey) in a heavy-handed way which its texture seems almost too fragile to bear.



We have had a number of American films which have treated the youth or 'hippie' or drug culture; but they have caricatured or ridiculed it, treated it with contempt or condescension or at best a false, uncomprehending sympathy. *Easy Rider* is probably the first above-ground movie which treats the culture mainly from the viewpoint of the youth of that culture. And the film itself is characteristic of that culture, displaying both its virtues (or perhaps rather its ideals, the virtues we would like to think it has) and the faults which may be inseparable from those virtues: gentleness, tolerance, grace, openness to experience; disconnectedness, disengagement, monotony, an emotional and intellectual vacuousness. The world of *Easy Rider* is in many ways the opposite of the world of *Midnight Cowboy*. The world of the latter film is the world of the closed-in spaces of the big American city, where action is a continual series

of quick, darting manoeuvres. *Easy Rider*, on the contrary, breathes the space of the American highway and landscape; it is leisurely, 'spaced out', like its characters.

Defending the historical falsifications of *Bonnie and Clyde*, Pauline Kael wrote that it—like John Ford's 1939 *Young Mr. Lincoln*—is a 'poetic evocation of the legendary American past' which, 'by getting at how we feel about the past, moves us far more than attempts at historical re-creation.' Although *Easy Rider* is about the present, not the past, it can be explained—and perhaps defended—in a similar way. It is an expression of a certain feeling we have about the American present in relation to a feeling which we have about the American past. This feeling, although a great over-simplification, has a kind of mythic truth; and although a minority of Americans have had the feeling for years, it has never before been given such clear or moving expression in a piece of mass entertainment.

This is the feeling—on the part of many Americans, particularly liberal white middle-class Americans—that despite our own goodness we have been betrayed, and America has betrayed us. We did our homework, we minded our manners, we minded our own business, we never did *them* any harm, all we did was try to make a comfortable place for ourselves—and still, it seems, we may get it in the neck. We believed in the American dream of freedom and comfort, we followed its rules and its dogma, and all we have left in return for our faith and our obedience are death, danger, and the precariousness of life. Somehow we thought our faith and our goodness would save us from all this.

Wyatt, Billy and George are innocent. They die gratuitously, for the way they look. We identify their innocence with our own, and in pitying them we pity ourselves. Our sorrow and outrage over their deaths are in some sense sorrow and outrage over the possibility of our own.

But beneath this—one cannot say how conscious it is—is another meaning, deeper, paradoxical, and less obvious. Are the heroes simply innocent? In their very break from American society, the hippies are not only rebelling, they are also acting out the intrinsic hubris of the American dream: the belief that happiness is in some sense guaranteed, that it's easy to be happy. Ratso Rizzo, of *Midnight Cowboy*, on the outskirts of American society, imagines a promised land he will never attain in a mythic Florida of his dreams. But the heroes of *Easy Rider* are already in the promised land in 'fat city,' at least in their own minds, from the beginning of the movie. High on their motorcycles, content in their pot-dreams—is it any wonder they are shot down? They are guilty as well as innocent, guilty by their very innocence; and we can see their deaths as a kind of atonement for the monstrous naive innocence of America.

A long way from Home



by Joseph McBride and Michael Wilmington

IT WAS LIKE seeing an apparition, or like stumbling unawares into another country. Here, in a somnolent little farming town in the middle of Wisconsin, a Swedish film company was shooting a film. Bearded, livid-faced character actors vaguely familiar from half-a-dozen Bergman films were lounging in the grass eating a picnic lunch. Local people in 1850s pioneer costumes were milling around, their faces grubby with unaccustomed whiskers. A railroad museum had been refurbished to appear as the tiny depot of Albany, New York, and a marvellous little train was spewing out smoke for the first time in ages. Liv Ullmann and Max von Sydow

were sitting under a tree opening cans of soda pop.

Utvandrarna och Invandrarna (*The Emigrants and the Settlers*) will be the title of the two-part, four-hour film, the largest production in Swedish cinema history and the first Swedish film to be shot on location in the United States. Based on four recent, enormously popular novels by Wilhelm Moberg and produced by Svensk Filmindustri, it is the story of one of the many families who fled their unproductive homeland to come *Unto a Good Land*, to use the foreign title of

ABOVE: LUNCH BREAK AT NORTH FREEDOM. PHOTOGRAPH BY L. ROGER TURNER, WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL.

the second part, which was now being shot. The director is Jan Troell, who made *Here Is Your Life* and *Who Saw Him Die?* "Here Is Your Life was in a way an epic subject," Troell told us, "but not at all like this. It was more a psychological epic; it showed the development of a young boy, and it was all centred around him. This is really epic, I must say, and quite different in many ways . . ."

Troell was shooting his film in traditional Swedish conditions—casual, unhurried, small crew, no shouting, too far from civilisation to have to worry about rubber-necking crowds. Instead of a fast-talking press agent, we found the producer, Bengt Forslund, young and easy-going, who was co-founder of the Swedish film magazine *Chaplin* before becoming a producer. He asked us to share the lunch and introduced us to Troell, who was sitting right under our feet, eating quietly by himself. Max von Sydow wandered over for a cup of coffee, a black cape trailing from his shoulders like Death's in *The Seventh Seal*. Liv Ullmann appeared out of nowhere, smiling shyly and looking astonishingly lovely, bleached and fragile in the intense sunlight. We gave her a copy of an American film magazine with her picture, from *The Shame*, on the cover; von Sydow, Forslund and Troell gathered around her to look at it. Troell found an advertisement for *Here Is Your Life* and asked if he could take the magazine with him, because the illustration, he said, was much better than the poster he has in Sweden. Miss Ullmann drifted off to join her mother and her three-year-old daughter Linn, telling us she would read the article and let von Sydow know if he should talk to us.

"The film is a piece of Swedish history, a piece of American history," von Sydow said. "My character is a good farmer, a little stubborn, very honest. He doesn't trust anyone except himself; he doesn't trust God either. He thinks God cheats him every now and then, particularly because his wife is a very strong believer and trusts in everything God promises her. Towards the end of her life—she is not very old, she is around forty, but she has been working too hard and had too many children—the doctor tells her that she will probably not survive a new childbirth. But then she decides that if it's God's will, I will survive, and I shouldn't do anything about it. So she becomes pregnant again, and becomes very sick and dies, and my character gets very, very . . ."—he smiles and laughs slightly—" . . . disappointed about what God does to his wife. He wants to go his own way, and if he gets into a difficult situation he never yields, really. His philosophy is that one should always try once more. He always does and he somehow manages. The story is little things that happen: it should be rather easy to identify with the people and with the situation."

* * *

The company has been working extremely hard, despite the relaxed appearance, for more than six months in Sweden, Copenhagen, Colorado and Wisconsin. Troell, who wrote the script with Forslund and is photographing the film himself, has exposed 240,000 feet of film, with 60 per cent of the production completed. The budget is 5 million Kroner (£250,000), and the editing will take almost a year. The day before we arrived at the railroad museum in North Freedom, Wisconsin, some 200 miles from Chicago, the company had shot the immigrants' departure west by train from Albany, and today the shooting was taking place inside the train.

Forslund said the film would really take shape in the editing. "In a way you could say that Troell doesn't know what he is doing. He shoots a hell of a lot of footage. He began as a still photographer and shot television documentaries for quite a while before I asked him to direct one of the episodes in a film called *Four by Four*. And the way he shoots features I think reflects his documentary training. He arranges a master shot with the big camera and shoots every scene all the way through a couple of times; he never knows where he's going to put the camera until after he has gone over the scene with the actors. Then he works through the material with a hand-held camera, shooting close-ups and details. This is directly in contrast to the method of another young director whose films I produce, Jan Halldoff, who knows exactly what

he is going to do in advance. But I wouldn't want to change a director—I wouldn't want a man to be something he isn't. And I would say that next to Bergman, Troell is the finest director we have in Sweden today.

"He is in the tradition of Sjöström and Stiller, but he really hasn't seen many films. He is an epic director; his films are rather slow and intense. Actually, the director he most reminds me of is Mark Donskoi. When I offered him *Four by Four* he was quite young, wasn't well known at all, but he said, 'I want Max von Sydow for the film.' Well, we got von Sydow, but he was acting in an American film, *The Reward*, and they had to shoot past their schedule. It made us both rather nervous—it was Troell's first film as a director, and my first as a producer—and we just had to wait for him. But the American company paid us for the week's delay, and the money they gave us was more than the entire budget of our film. That made us relax a little.

"There were many directors in Sweden who wanted to film the Moberg novels. I think there were at least three scripts completed by different people, but Moberg didn't want anyone to turn them into a film, since he had had some bad experiences with movies before. But he saw *Here Is Your Life*, and he let it be known that he thought Troell should make this film. And from the moment the novels were published, the Swedish people knew that Max von Sydow would have to play the part of the man. They wouldn't accept anyone else. Liv Ullmann was suggested by von Sydow, and everyone was very surprised when she decided to be in the film."

While we were talking to von Sydow, Miss Ullmann came up and returned the magazine. "Don't talk to them," she said, blushing a little, and walked away to rejoin her daughter, who was off in the field pulling her dress over her head. The shooting resumed, but we talked to von Sydow again during a wait between takes at the side of the tracks, and at his motel that night, when we also talked to Miss Ullmann. Now, however, we were sitting in the back of the slowly moving train car watching Troell shoot a scene in which the immigrants, starving, exhausted and afraid, tenderly examine a U.S. coin with the motto 'In God We Trust'.

Troell would dub in the sound when he returned to Sweden because it was impossible to operate a generator in the moving train. And despite the closeness of the hot cabin, the noise from the extras and spectators outside, and someone's baby crying in the adjoining car, he moved through his business methodically and without fuss, talking to his actors constantly. When he is away from the set he comes across as slightly nervous, but here he was an eye of composure.

Eddie Axberg, who plays von Sydow's younger brother, was operating a microphone recording a transcript of the dialogue. Allan Edwall, a veteran of several Bergman films, was holding up the coin for von Sydow and Miss Ullmann to inspect; he also held the clapper board for several takes. More often than not, though, nobody bothered with it. Another actor leaned back on a pile of luggage, helping Troell's two camera assistants with measuring sticks while the wardrobe mistress sewed up a hole in his crotch. He seemed greatly amused by his position, and declaimed 'In God We Trust' loudly while she went at her work. One of the actresses was reading Hedy Lamarr's *Ecstasy and Me* during the long waits for lighting adjustments. Only the script girl, who was taking snapshots of each set-up with a Polaroid camera, seemed at all bothered by the delays.

Troell confirmed later that he gives his actors great latitude. "I try to work in a documentary style, and they are given the situation and some certain things to do from the script, but then they can improvise. I feel handicapped in dealing with actors, but not because I'm a photographer. I have little complexes because I have no theatrical training, and I haven't worked much with actors. But both directing and photographing a film—I couldn't think of anything else. I must be able to improvise moving the camera while I'm directing. Of course there are drawbacks too—when you're looking through the camera you can't see everything. But to me the drawbacks are less than the advantages. I like very much to work with a hand camera. You can be very close and intimate and follow things much more, and you can work much



JAN TROELL AT WORK. PHOTOGRAPH BY ROY ZALESKY, THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL

faster with it, too." He volunteers the rather startling information that though he is shooting in colour, he is colour-blind. "I have a little red-green, but reality looks like it looks, and so I can't change that. Of course sometimes I'm not quite sure if there is something wrong in make-up or something, which other people see for me."

The directors he regards as his influences share his feeling for natural settings. "I like Truffaut in France, in America especially John Ford. Of Ford, oh, I like almost everything. And I love Westerns, good Westerns. But there are many, many other directors I like. In Sweden there is Bergman. I have liked to go to the cinema since I was a kid, and I usually go to the cinema the same way nowadays."

Why have some of the younger Swedish directors attacked Bergman? "Because they think that all his films, most of his films anyhow, were too private, and so egocentric—they dealt first with his religious problems, always with his problems in a way—and he was not socially engaged enough, after their opinion. I don't think that way because I think it's ridiculous to press any specific content on a director . . ."

The shooting temporarily at an end, the train made its laborious four-and-a-half mile journey back to the station. A little old man who works at the railroad museum and plays a conductor in the film hung over the edge of the train at every crossing, signalling diligently to the cows and to the occupant of one solitary car, who seemed bewildered at the strange pageant passing before him. Von Sydow was reading inside the cabin, but the other actors rode the flatcar ahead, sitting on barrels and playing cards. We pulled into the station to drop off the extras, and Troell and his principals took off again to shoot a few more takes in the waning late-afternoon light. Tomorrow he was to shoot exterior shots of the train, while the actors moved on to Cassville, Wisconsin, to prepare for scenes on a Mississippi paddleboat.

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Liv Ullmann, who married Ingmar Bergman last year, started her theatre career in Denmark at the age of seventeen. She acted in Danish and Swedish films before appearing in *Persona*, in which she played a stage actress who suddenly goes mute during a performance of *Electra*. After *Persona*, appropriately enough, Bergman directed her on stage in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. We chatted with her about her husband's taste in movies (Fellini and Ford), about his house on the island where *Persona* was shot (he recently bought the island) and about his large film collection ("We watch films almost every night").

The actress who was so brilliant and ambivalent in *Persona*

is deceptive in other ways. Close up, one is captured by her large, large blue eyes, which seem to draw a listener deep into her, and by her tentative, sensitive, almost pained smile. A distance of a few feet removes this authority, especially as she does not carry herself with the self-conscious glamour of many actresses. She is surprising because of her diffidence, a hesitant, almost self-effacing girlish quality which does not match the strength of the women she has played in Bergman's films. Men, and supposedly capable women, are constantly clinging to her on the screen, but in person she projects fragility. As she talked with us at the motel, sitting on a lawn chair in the chilly twilight, she seemed intelligent, reserved, and vulnerable in an attractive way. She would break into pleased smiles when we recalled an especially moving scene from *The Shame*, or quoted Godard on *Persona*, but she also accepted some long-winded and slightly irrelevant theorising on Bergman with what may have been quiet irony.

We mentioned a television interview in which she had said that she envied Bibi Andersson in *Persona*. "Oh, yes. At first I thought it would be great not being able to say anything, because I would be mysterious. But after a while I began to become frustrated not having anything to say, because I had to be cold and withdrawn—I had to mask my feelings but I had to *show* everything. I had to project myself out to the audience by thinking my role very strongly, and it was very difficult."

We told her of Godard's remark that he didn't understand *Persona*, although he liked it, and that he thought the actress was healthy and the nurse the sick character. "Yes, I think that the actress is the more healthy of the two—except in her relations with her husband and son—because she refuses to lie, because she withdraws from the necessity of telling lies." She emphasised by making a motion of a curtain dropping. "I understood the story, although Ingmar didn't discuss the general idea of the film very much with us. He doesn't like to explain things—he tries to make his actors feel at ease in their parts. When we did the scene where I watched the Buddhist monk burning on television, he didn't tell me what he wanted, he just had me react to what I saw. We did the scene on three different occasions, and he didn't tell me what he didn't like about it. He just had me do it again . . ."

Did she think that *Persona* was about her character? "I always think the story is about my character."

She admitted that during the shooting of *The Shame* she was afraid while doing the scene next to the burning building, and upset having to watch the chickens being killed by the soldiers. Beyond that, we didn't ask her much about *The Shame*; she had us almost mesmerised. We did muster the



RAIN-MAKING BY A WISCONSIN FIREMAN. PHOTOGRAPH BY ROY ZALESKY, THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL.

presence of mind, though, to ask her about other Bergman roles.

On *Hour of the Wolf*: "I didn't understand the film while it was being shot, but after I saw it put together I think I understood it. I asked Ingmar whether the people my husband sees are real or imaginary, and he said 'What do you think?' I think it was good that I didn't really understand what was happening, because it fitted the character. You should remember that the film is not only seen from the point of view of the husband, but from the wife's description of him and from her reading of his diary. My monologue at the beginning was supposed to take place in several different locations, but during rehearsals Ingmar just for fun let the camera run on, and he decided to keep that in the film."

On the recently completed *A Passion*: "I can't tell you exactly what it's about—it's hard to put it in words. My character is a strong woman, but she has killed her husband in a car accident while she was driving. She regards herself as very honest but she hurts people when they interfere with the way she sees things."

On the Bergman-Fellini project *Love Duet*: "I can't say anything about the story, but I won't be acting in it. I'll be starting *Man's Fate* with Max von Sydow in London this January for Fred Zinnemann. I always like the way Zinnemann handles the actors in his movies, and I don't think of it as really a Hollywood film. I wouldn't want to play *My Fair Lady*, you know . . . I am really a stage actress. Film-making bothers me: I need to have direct contact with an audience. I want to go back to the theatre."

* * *

Well above six feet tall, Max von Sydow towers over his fellow actors like a basketball forward who has wandered into a hotel lobby. After the impression of asceticism and suffering he generally conveys on the screen, it is surprising to see him so tall, bluff and self-confident. Only in his eyes—the deep, penetrating blue which sometimes seems almost a necessity for film actors, at least those who capture the imagination of large sections of the audience—only here can one sense a connection with the fatalistic knight in *The Seventh Seal*, the Christlike charlatan in *The Face*, the suicide in *Winter Light*. The actor, considerate and affable to an astonishing degree, treated us as if we had wandered by to compare notes; and as we reclined with him in the shade of a tree, it was impossible not to think of *The Seventh Seal*, of von Sydow and Bibi Andersson passing around strawberries and fresh milk and Nils Poppe strumming his lute.

Von Sydow seems almost empty of that edgy narcissism one senses so often in actors and would-be actors: he can command respect simply by the notable absence of any demands for it, and unlike many American actors he does not seem compelled to mentally seduce all those to whom he talks. During the long hours of shooting in the hot train car,

in which he was required to do little more than keep the back of his head immobile, he never lost his composure. During the lulls he was reading J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Two Towers*.

"I think film-making is more interesting for the director than for the actors," he admitted, "because it's such an enormous challenge for a director to have this form of expression. Sometimes I do get bored with the long waits between shots, and it gets tiring when they're only shooting part of you—shooting your hand, or shooting over your shoulder when you're just supposed to react to another actor who is talking. Or when the camera is way off in the distance and you're just running along or doing some stupid thing."

Does he have plans to direct a film himself? "No, not serious plans. I've had ideas. I want to go back to the theatre—or direct a film, yes. I haven't been on the stage for ten years, but Bergman came to me recently and asked if I'd like to be in one of his plays next season. I told him I'd like to do it."

Von Sydow worked on the stage with Bergman for a year before doing *The Seventh Seal*, and the plays he has done with him include *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Misanthrope*, Strindberg's *Erik XIV*, and *Peer Gynt*, which Bergman is going to film. "Bergman is a very great theatre director. He is very discreet with the actors. At the start of the production he discusses with the actors a little bit about the play, the author, what he wants out of the production. And after the first blocking, you can tell instinctively what he wants, without any further explanation. Once a young actor came to me who had never worked with Bergman before, and he was upset. He said, 'What should I do? He doesn't tell me anything!' But when Bergman is getting what he wants, he doesn't say anything. It's only when he's not that he talks to you about it."

"He is very theatrical. In the Swedish language we have two senses of the word 'theatrical', one which is good and one which is not good, and Bergman is theatrical in the good sense. Yes, in his films, too. On the stage he has a great feeling for the tensions between characters, and he is able to create a strong rhythm. He had an extensive training in music, and he still thinks a great deal about it; this is reflected in his direction. He creates a pattern, a sort of web, and this makes it very easy to act for him. And he makes wonderful use of silences, which I love."

"He has a marvellous way of making fun or playing with the play and with the characters, so that you lose all excess respect you may have for the character or for the playwright—for the beauty of it maybe. And the story and the characters in the play become close to you."

Does Bergman discuss the roles much with his actors? "Not very much, not really. He's very intuitive. First of all, he knows his people very well. They know him very well. You feel he's always a couple of steps ahead of you somehow. He knows what you are going to say, what you are going to do in advance. Maybe he does, maybe he doesn't, but you have the feeling that he always knows this. When he is planning a film, he comes to you and asks if you will be free to appear in it, and then he writes the part for you to play. But he doesn't discuss it with you until he has finished writing the script. He is the sort of man who inspires people to do their best because he demands very much of himself. I would say he works with more leisure now than he did in the past. He has personally more freedom to work now—he had a great freedom at that time too, but today he has complete freedom, I would say, and that makes him feel better when he works. Of course at the same time the audience demands more from him, so that also makes him more nervous in a way."

"Except when he has a small cast, Bergman doesn't rehearse extensively before shooting. In his new film *The Rite*, which he made for television, he rehearsed several weeks because he used only four actors, and he shot the film in three or four days. In *Through a Glass Darkly*, we rehearsed more than the usual because there were only four characters."

"Bergman tries to shoot a film in chronological order, if possible, though it doesn't always work out that way. He usually tries for a rising line of intensity. Do you remember the scene in *The Virgin Spring* in which the father hears that his daughter has been raped and murdered? Well, he moves

into his business of preparing for the revenge without pausing, very simply. For an actor it is difficult to sustain and develop this in a film. It is as if you are on a ladder and you have got to step five, and then you must get to step eight, but you have to remember that six and seven are in between."

We asked if it is true that *Winter Light* is Bergman's favourite film. (We asked Liv Ullmann the same question, and she replied, rather disarmingly, "Yes, that's what he says in his interviews.") "I think so," von Sydow said. "That film was an achievement for Bergman because the characters were very real, very direct, and the photography also pleased him very much. It was simple, all greys. There was only one ray of sunshine in the film. It could easily be boring, I suppose, if you are not interested in the characters, because you get very close to them."

We asked him about some of Bergman's recent films.

Hour of the Wolf: "It was depressing because it dealt with such difficult things to express, and it is a depressing story, of course, because it deals with a deteriorating mind, and it's one of the Bergman stories which really treats different ways of humiliation. It's interesting, but it affects me. The character was difficult to play because the only changes he undergoes are variations in the degree of his anguish, a little this way, a little that way, but mostly the same. We talked over whether the people that the artist meets are totally real, totally imaginary, or real people distorted by the artist's mind. Bergman told me that I had to make a choice, and I did. I'll tell you, but don't write it, because it's important that it should be left open for the audience to decide."

The Shame: "In his earlier films, Bergman's dialogue was very poetic, very pleasing for an actor to speak. And *The Shame* has an extremely beautiful screenplay and a simple, clear story. But Bergman also did something which was a departure for him—he started to let us improvise our dialogue. Do you remember the scene where the husband and wife are eating supper together?" Von Sydow leaned over and diagrammed on the grass the two camera positions, one looking over his shoulder at Liv Ullmann, one over her shoulder at him, and the tracking movement of both cameras towards their faces; in the film Bergman used the shot of Liv Ullmann without cutting to von Sydow. "Bergman gave us the topics to talk about, and we invented what we said according to what was happening to the characters. We shot it three times until he was satisfied. I found this kind of freedom very exciting."

A Passion: "It's the story of a man, a scientist who has renounced his work, his friends and his wife. He becomes attached to a woman and then he wants to disengage himself from her. It sounds banal but it's really very interesting. It was shot on the same locations as *The Shame*, but in colour. The colour is very beautiful, very simple."

We asked him why Bergman had decided to go back to colour after his unhappy experiences with *Now About These Women*. "I think he feels that you can no longer avoid colour, that this is an area which has many possibilities for experiment . . . I haven't seen *These Women*. During the shooting of *The Shame* I asked Bergman if he would screen it for me, but he said that he had made a mistake on the film, and if he had done it again he would have corrected it. He thought the colour was too elegant. It should have been less refined."

On *The Greatest Story Ever Told*: "I had misgivings about the part of Christ. I was sort of forced into it, for many reasons. But after I met George Stevens and discussed it with him, I wanted to do it because I was interested in his ideas about the story. My performance was not entirely my performance. I personally don't agree with that interpretation of Christ, entirely. I agree with parts of it, but not all of it. There are so many ways to attack such a subject, such a character: there are as many ways as there are believers or interested non-believers. But I wouldn't have cast myself in the part."

Did he like to work with Stevens, who is famous for shooting many takes of each scene? "Yes, that is a good school for a movie actor. You really have to know what you are doing, because he shoots exactly the same thing so many times and from so many different directions and distances that when he shoots the first set-up you are caught, you have



OUTSIDE THE CABIN AT MILTON, WISCONSIN. LIV ULLMANN (BACKGROUND, RIGHT), LINN ULLMANN (FOREGROUND).

to stay in what you do at that time, you have to reproduce that. It's difficult and very demanding, but interesting. Sometimes you can make little changes, but sometimes it's impossible because you are already locked. You don't know what he is going to use."

His favourite roles? "I enjoyed both *Christ* and *Hawaii*, very much, and all Bergman's films too, particularly maybe *The Shame*, *The Virgin Spring*, *The Face*, *The Seventh Seal*. Well, it's difficult to compare them. They are all challenges, but perhaps the greatest challenge was the last one, *A Passion*, very difficult but very interesting for me."

His favourite actors? "Bogart, Spencer Tracy, Rod Steiger, Henry Fonda. I think Alan Arkin is a very fine comic actor. And a Swedish actor, Allan Edwall, who is in *The Emigrants* and *the Settlers* and who gave a marvellous performance in *Here Is Your Life*. I even like to watch that fellow in *Bullitt*, Steve McQueen . . ."

Why, finally, do young Swedish directors attack Ingmar Bergman? "Because they are jealous of him. And because they are disturbed by him." We reminded him of Bo Widerberg's comment that Bergman is tedious because he still deals with the problem of God. "Well, that's up to him. Now the younger directors attack Bo Widerberg. But he's very good too, I think. I haven't worked with him, but I would love to. I would also like to do more work with Sjöman, maybe, Vilgot Sjöman. There's another one, Jan Halldoff. And I would love to work with Mike Nichols and Stanley Kubrick."

SHOOTING INSIDE THE CABIN AT MILTON. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROY ZALESKY, THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL.



FILM REVIEWS

ALICE'S RESTAURANT

WOODY GUTHRIE was the greatest of all white American folksinger-composers, author of *This Land is Your Land*, *This Train is Bound for Glory*, numerous protest ballads and union organising songs. As a political activist and migrant labourer, he travelled the hard way, sampling jails and doss houses throughout the country, celebrating the unrealised promise of American life and the decency of its exploited poor. He died in October 1967 after being incapacitated for several years by an incurable disease of the nervous system, Huntington's chorea, which might possibly be a hereditary condition. His son Arlo Guthrie, now in his early twenties, is also a folksinger, but unlike his rugged father, Arlo's a long-haired hippie with a gentle, unmarked face, slightly feminine (yet not remotely effeminate) in appearance. He too is both very American and very much at odds with his society, though less aggressively, less actively, less programmatically so than his father.

Arlo made his name at the Newport Folk Festival three years back with the rambling, twenty-minute talking blues *Alice's Restaurant Massacre*, a hilariously funny, highly oblique protest song in which he described how the full force of the law was brought to bear on him for dumping litter on Thanksgiving Day 1965 in the small Massachusetts town of Stockbridge. The litter belonged to his Thanksgiving hosts, Ray and Alice, who ran a local restaurant and lived in a deconsecrated church. For this offence, Arlo and his accomplice were briefly jailed and fined fifty dollars. Subsequently, according to the song, he went to a military induction centre in New York and was found unfit to murder women and children for his country because he hadn't fully rehabilitated himself after this heinous crime.

Arthur Penn (with Venable Herndon as co-scenarist) has taken the two incidents from the song and woven them into an account of two years in Arlo's life, during which he studies music for a short, comically unhappy while at a Montana college (mainly to get draft deferment), becomes a professional singer, observes the rise and decline of the hippie haven that Ray and

Alice run in their Stockbridge church, and stands helplessly by as his speechless father sinks into death.

As director of *Alice's Restaurant* (United Artists), Penn has chosen to work with a part professional, part amateur cast. Arlo plays himself charmingly but without resonance; Pete Seeger appears briefly to sing Woody Guthrie's *Pastures of Plenty* beside its author's hospital bed and Joni Mitchell sings her *Songs to Ageing Children* at a hippie funeral; the parts of tolerantly bemused Officer Obie who arrests Arlo for littering and the blind judge who sentences him are apparently and astonishingly taken by the actual officials who inspired the ballad. Two extremely able actors, James Broderick and the strikingly attractive Pat Quinn, play Ray and Alice; more through the authority of their performances than the centrality of their roles they dominate the picture. The result is a film of considerable beauty, no rancour and not a little ambiguity, an episodic, elegiac movie that implicitly contrasts two conflicting responses to the hugeness and complexity of America—the committed, populist, political approach that seeks to change the system which Woody symbolises; and the urge to opt out and found an autonomous community for which Ray and Alice stand. The validity of the social criticism each tendency proposes is not in question, but American history is flanked by parallel trails of bleached bones left by the failure of movements inspired by these extreme, idealistic impulses.

Standing at the centre of the picture, Arlo shares the superficially similar rhetoric of rebellion that links his dying father to the 'beautiful people' who congregate around Ray and Alice, but is both a rather insubstantial mediator between the two life styles and an inadequate critic of either. 'Seems like Woody's road might have passed through here sometime,' he muses on seeing a gospel meeting as he crosses the country, and later after being thankfully rejected by the army he wonders if he'd have had the guts to go to jail for his convictions as his father did. What con-

victions?—'It may take some hard travelin' to find out for myself.' More crucially, he becomes instantly aware while hitchhiking of being rejected as an alien creature by a tough truckdriver (just the sort of man who'd have immediately befriended Woody) who grabs a cigar and tunes into a football game on his radio as soon as he sees Arlo's hair released from beneath his cowboy hat. And in an exceedingly self-righteous scene Arlo himself cruelly rejects the amorous advances of his female employer, a generous club owner who had been a friend of Woody in the old days of 'the Movement'.

Yet Arlo doesn't exactly belong to the world of Ray and Alice either. He casts a benevolent eye on the establishment of their little community, yet while joining in their self-conscious rituals and celebrations he does so with an obvious detachment. In his *fausse naïveté* there is a calculated professional posture, in that of his father an earnest aspiration; the same trait in Alice and Ray is an act of self-deception, a mask for an absence of genuine spontaneity. Penn is almost certainly more aware of this than he initially lets on.

Presumably Ray and Alice are attempting to stave off the process of ageing in acting as surrogate parents and ringleaders to their collection of dropouts and misfits, hoping to be among the chosen few over thirty (and well over thirty) that the young people trust. They're also fleeing from themselves and the difficulties of their own marriage. 'I guess I'm a bitch with too many pups and I can't stand them all milking me,' Alice says to Arlo on a transitory flight from Ray. In his immaturity he can offer her no comfort. Nor can he be of assistance when Ray and Alice struggle possessively for the devotion of their most difficult charge, a brooding young junkie artist, Shelly, whom they unwittingly drive back to drugs. At several points Penn forcibly establishes that the couple have taken on the responsibility of running a church that in most respects resembles the other churches in the community, except that once the faith of Ray and Alice begins to crumble there's nothing to fall back on.

"ALICE'S RESTAURANT"





"LA VOIE LACTÉE": LAURENT TERZIEFF, PAUL FRANKEUR.

Shelly's death coincides with the death of Arlo's father, and depending upon your response to what has gone before you'll regard this as predictable or inexorable or just formally satisfactory. According to his carefully expressed wishes, Woody has no funeral, merely a scattering of ashes at Coney Island, the sight of which Penn tactfully spares us. For Shelly on the other hand there's an elaborate funeral in the snow with his astrological sign drawn on the coffin—Sagittarius, the sign, I believe, of optimism as well as the Winter Solstice.

'I guess maybe our beauty wasn't coming through'—'Maybe we haven't been so beautiful lately,' Ray and Alice reflect after the funeral, and decide that to recapture the old magic they'll get married again. The ensuing service has all the surface exuberance but none of the underlying feeling of their previous celebrations. They have reached an end and all they can do is go elsewhere—to die on one last crazy trip or, more likely, to set up a communal farm in Vermont. All that Arlo can do is move on out and leave them. The final image is as fine as anything that Penn has ever given us and as deceptively simple as the funeral sequence is intricate. It's a long held shot, closely resembling an Andrew Wyeth painting, of Alice standing outside the church, her faded wedding dress merging into the peeling, weather-beaten white wooden façade; the camera glides back and forth to view her from either side of a tree, and clouds pass over the winter sun as they did in that memorable cornfield scene in *Bonnie and Clyde*.

Stylistically *Alice's Restaurant* has much in common with *Bonnie and Clyde* with its sudden switches of mood from farce to near-tragedy: the alternation between lingering sequences of dreamy impressionism and short jabbing scenes of ironic comment; lyrical linking montages; the sudden confrontation of fantasy and reality. Thematically too there's the same concern for the alienated and disaffiliated, trapped by their own myths, and a similar unconcealed love of failure, death and heroic rejection. The representatives of organised society are still seen from the outsider's viewpoint in terms of caricature, but generally more sympathetically than in *Bonnie*

and *Clyde*; though here Penn has taken his cue from the spirit of Arlo Guthrie's song, which managed to preserve a curious tension between understatement and wild exaggeration.

Alice is, however, a considerably more ambitious film and rather less successful. It is one thing to want to know more than we are told about the characters; it is another to feel that we aren't told anything like enough—especially about Ray and Alice. Having said this and having noted a couple of vogueishly vapid scenes of falsely lyrical love-making, it would be churlish to conclude without observing that *Alice's Restaurant* is a subtle, funny, tender and original movie that may not perhaps increase Arthur Penn's present high standing but will certainly do nothing to diminish it.

PHILIP FRENCH

LA VOIE LACTÉE

IN LA ILUSION VIAJA EN TRANVIA, a tramcar, overdue for honourable retirement, is taken for a last and suitably anarchic spin by a crew who have apparently been over-inspired (but of course, since this is a Buñuel film) by indulgence at a religious festival. It is not entirely fanciful to suppose that *La Voie Lactée* (Planet) is Buñuel's last spin, a final and plausibly anarchic assault on man's capacity to forget his humanity when face to face with what he judges to be immortal.

This detailed and exhaustive history of heresy in 19 sequences has certainly been received in France as if it were a testament, but, to be sure, the 'living cathedral' still breathes and we have learnt before to be wary of farewell appearances. By all accounts he looked somewhat frail when receiving his special award at the Venice Festival, yet hardly a man without a last surprise or two up his sleeve. The question is—does he supply them here? Well, yes and no. There are times when *La Voie Lactée* looks pretty frail too beside the severity of *Nazarin* or *Viridiana*, even *Simon of the*

Desert. One is never quite sure whether it is Buñuel defying God as usual, or the Almighty getting His own back for the first time.

There is somehow an unfamiliar softness behind the irony, even behind that wickedly impious portrayal of Jesus which has Bernard Verley, pastel-robed and rather sheepish, stopped in the act of shaving (with a cut-throat vaguely reminiscent of *Un Chien Andalou*) by the Virgin's remark: 'Mon fils, ne te rase pas. Tu es beaucoup mieux avec ta barbe.' It is not for nothing, one feels, that a Catholic critic remarked with indelible certainty after the first London showing: 'Ah, he has RC written right across his heart.' Perhaps it is just that we like to hedge our bets a bit when the possibility of a final confrontation approaches. Whatever it is, the film is quintessential, but rarely vintage Buñuel.

The plain and perfect method, with its slightly self-denying reliance on *le plan Americain* and its aesthetic refusal to make anything look too pretty, is totally unravaged by time—it looks better and better, in fact, beside much of today's prodigious tastelessness. There is still also the capacity to emerge now and then from behind the various masks (surrealist, showman, humanitarian and practical joker) with an expression that would wipe the complacency off the face of either the most spiritual or the completest materialist. To the former he is again saying: 'If God exists, how I hate Him.' This time the latter get: 'My hatred of science and technology will perhaps bring me to the absurdity of a belief in God.' Each statement is of course highly ambivalent. He has never been concerned to demythologise art with clear answers to cloudy questions. There is too much at stake for that.

But he has, in another way, never been more precise. His many months of collaboration with Jean-Claude Carrière on a project long mulled over has prompted him to note, with uncharacteristic emphasis over the final credits, that everything in the film which concerns Catholicism and the heresies to which it has given rise is rigorously exact. The texts and citations are either taken from the Scriptures or from works of theology, which is perhaps why it has already been dubbed a theological Western. Yet one does not always feel, as his two tramps (Paul Frankeur and Laurent Terzieff, very much waiting for Godot) make their pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James at Santiago de Compostella (Campus Stella, the road to the stars, hence The Milky Way), that the same rigour has been applied to the metaphysics of the film as to the delineation of the heresies themselves.

When we reach the problem of transubstantiation, for instance, an innkeeper says that for him the Host is both wafer and body of Christ, in the same way as paté is both itself and hare. Whereupon a curé who is afterwards gently taken off to an asylum complains bitterly that this is precisely the heresy of the 16th century Pateliers. Good history no doubt, and amusingly done. But when we have finished smiling at the scene's absurdity, what have we really got left? Not perhaps much more than a paté.

And so it goes on, and it does go on rather. Our two puzzled combatants wander not only along the route to the shrine but through space and time as well. They witness a duel between a Jansenist and a Jesuit who insult each other (before walking off arm in arm) with statements that are extracted, word for blessed word, from 17th century texts. They watch as children recite some of the more lunatic canons of the

Church at a summer picnic-cum-pantomime, the scene crosscut with visions of young revolutionaries shooting the Holy Father with unholy zeal. They dream uncomfortably of Priscillian, the heretic bishop of Avila (the only way to liberate the soul from the body is to exhaust the body of its pleasures), and later meet a whore (Delphine Seyrig, somewhat uncertain) with whom they cavort in the bushes in an unconscious travesty of the aforesaid heresy—particularly apt, it turns out, since there's a rumour that the body of St. James is, in fact, that of Priscillian after all. Finally we meet Jesus again, who uncompromisingly underlines that He has come to earth to divide as well as to unite.

The film encompasses all six major heresy-inducing dogmas—Christ at once both God and Man, the Trinity, Transubstantiation, the Immaculate Conception, Free Will and God's prescience, and the Origins of Evil. It is an unprecedented primer for Catholics, an ammunition dump for unbelievers, an amusement for filmgoers, and for Buñuel possibly a necessary exorcism. Like most surrealists, he has been totally hypnotised by the superstructure of religion and bewitched by man's attempt to mould that edifice so that it conforms to the baser and/or more foolish instincts of his own nature. The result, he seems to say (but things are not often what they seem with Buñuel), ends not only in the corruption of religion but, much more important, of man himself. Though *La Voie Lactée* ultimately seems too much of an entertainment for the proper underlining of its more deadly purposes, one thing is patently clear. He is still after 'shaking the optimism of the bourgeois world.' One just wishes that his latest attempt to do so wasn't quite so easy to be taken up and cherished by that world. Once we start overtly patting him on the head, he is sunk.

DEREK MALCOLM

ARTISTES AT THE TOP OF THE BIG TOP: DISORIENTATED

ITEM FROM TODAY'S newspaper: America, faced with yet another enormous surplus of wheat, decides that it makes good economic sense to destroy it. On another page a report from Biafra, where the number of dead is now approaching two million. Reader momentarily imagines that there ought to be a connection between these two facts, then remembers *realpolitik* and the built-in irrationalities of the advanced capitalist economy and reluctantly concludes that there is not.

Item from Alexander Kluge's *Artistes at the Top of the Big Top: Disorientated* (Cinecenta): Lotte Losemeyer, book-keeper, counts out 156,000 Deutschmarks belonging to her negligent employer and flushes them down the lavatory; then decides that this is more like work than pleasure and begins to retrieve them. A self-contained, seemingly pointless scene, with no immediately apparent connection with the rest of the film. Yet it could be seen as the most transparent expression of one of this very opaque film's basic themes: the endless tug-of-war between impulse, whether socially, politically or artistically directed, and the cold, hard facts of economic reality. Dreams corroded by experience, ideals crumpled into illusions by the overwhelming weight of history. As one of the



"ARTISTES AT THE TOP OF THE BIG TOP": HANNELORE HOGER AS LENI PEICKERT.

characters puts it, we are like children forever blowing soap bubbles; they all burst, but we go on blowing because we go on believing that one day there'll be a bubble which won't burst.

Like *Yesterday Girl*, only more so, Kluge's second film is a fragmented mosaic of word and image, precise quotation and oblique allusion. The framework is the circus. Manfred Peickert, trapeze artist, dreams of creating a new kind of circus. 'If elephants could hang in the big top... I'd find it so beautiful and funny—they'd build it up. I can't express it better.' When he falls to his death in the ring, his daughter Leni inherits his dream. Her circus will be reformed, with the animals performing 'authentically', acts which will astonish by their audacity but will at the same time directly relate to the natural order of things. But the banks don't regard elephants as a good security and Leni runs up debts. A legacy from a millionairess friend solves the problem of capital, but at the last moment Leni realises that even her reformed circus will compromise her ideals. So she liquidates the circus and joins her colleagues in television. Lots of small steps, she decides, may be better than one big step which can never be realised.

Utopia, Leni says, will improve while we wait for it. But we don't have to wait for the end for this half-admitted disenchantment. Throughout the film ideas, clearly envisaged but inarticulately expressed, are disconcertingly undermined by contradiction. The opening title sums it up: 'You have achieved this high position. Now you don't know what to do. Merely to care is not enough.' Manfred Peickert records that the circus director conceded that his elephant idea was possible but rejected it as irrational. Leni's programme for her reformed circus includes such items as an elephant charging at the spectators and polar bears lighting a fire in the big top to warm themselves; but as the animal trainer tells her, only the jungle is authentic. And though she claims that the injustices of the status quo require an artist 'to perform his

art with ever greater convolutions,' she herself is soon forced to admit that she 'can't be an entrepreneur and remain an artiste.' She wants to change the circus, she says, because she loves it; to which the commentary replies that it's because she loves it that she won't change it. The elephants swear they will never forget, but go on performing to order. The system is self-perpetuating; only a capitalist can change what is, and what capitalist is going to?

This pattern of contradiction is reflected in the film's contrapuntal structure, the constant juxtaposition of lucid images and obscure ideas being itself a formal expression of the artist disoriented by the seemingly inevitable compromise between theory and practice (followed to its logical conclusion, of course, in Godard's *Gai Savoir*). On the one hand, illustrations of famous circuses of the past, stories about superlative feats in the ring, performers with grandiose ideas for acts and optimistic statements about artists uniting to change the world. On the other, flatly shot scenes of rehearsal and performance, the big top being dismantled at night, elephants stumbling across a forbidden frontier—above all, the mocking presence of a camera which probes the faces of characters whose words are sadly, even pathetically, unequal to the ideas they are trying to express.

The allusions are on occasion bewilderingly obscure, and one suspects that there are specifically German innuendoes which will inevitably fall on deaf English ears. But even if one fails to catch every nuance, the underlying theme is never obscured by the surface complexity. Images may appear at first glance to be non-referential, in that they don't have the obvious resonance of, for instance, the scene in *Yesterday Girl* when the organiser of a dog-training club enthuses about the desirability of all dogs joining the club; but closer inspection (and Kluge likens his film to a gramophone record which one buys because its content can't be assimilated at a single hearing) reveals their place in the general fabric.

The circus is, of course, the perfect all-purpose symbol, and the film offers a number of subsidiary interpretations running parallel to its central theme. The big top as an analogy for the German cinema, and more broadly for Germany itself. In the opening newsreel of the 1939 Day of German Art parade, Hitler the ringmaster reviews his performing animals while the soundtrack warbles with a Beatles song in praise of yesterday. 'Who, after Auschwitz, will stop us saying what we must?' chants a chorus of circus proprietors, in congress at Nuremberg. Freedom, says Leni, means that the audience accepts the entertainment we offer; but her programme for the reformed circus is no more than a set of elaborations on familiar routines, and as her friend Dr. Busch reminds her, a lot of people don't want to pay money to sit on a wooden bench when they can watch the circus on television in comfort.

But the film's very diffuseness resists attempts to pin down particular allusions. They remain, as Kluge intends them to, part of the general dialectic between artist and audience. A journalist asks Leni whether she doesn't think it dangerous to mix heterogeneous genres. Kluge would probably admit that it is, but only because Leni's problems are a reflection of his own, or indeed of those of anyone with an impulse to acrobatics on the high trapeze in a society which prefers its artists to accept the security of a net.

DAVID WILSON

ADALEN '31 and Z

BOTH Z AND ADALEN '31 can be called political films. The first pleads for peace and disarmament in a general sort of way, while putting the particular finger, by strong implication, on the Greek colonels. The second deals with the shooting by panicky soldiers of innocent strikers in rural Sweden in 1931. It is dedicated to the five who died, and by implication to all workers who are victims of the struggle against capitalism. They are both therefore, as the convention has it, left-wing films. We have no business to judge them politically, that's to say to measure their worth against our own political opinions, but it's interesting to note in passing that 'political' in art generally does mean 'left-wing' and, further, that when we think about such films nowadays it's more likely than not that we shall be ideologically supporting them in a way which might more affect our judgment than, say, would our support for the lonely sheriff, or the honest cop, or the girl falsely accused. It makes it more necessary than ever to express the small but important dissatisfaction these two films, in different ways, can cause, both aesthetically and thematically. I hope I don't mean politically.

Adalen '31 (Paramount) is a simple story. The Anderson family is a youngish couple with three boys of about 15, 11 and 4. Father Harald has been on strike for 80-odd days. He catches fish to eat. The older boy Kjell brings secret bread from his girl friend Anna, daughter of the rich factory owner. Harald and his wife cannot afford to make love in case it means another mouth to feed. Kjell makes his girl pregnant and her mother procures her an abortion in Stockholm. On a protest march to a nearby town the strikers are shot at by flustered soldiers, brought in to protect strike-

breakers. Harald Anderson, among others, is killed. The girl's father apologises to Kjell that he knew nothing about anything until it was too late. Kjell and his mother carry on. The government, we are told, falls.

So far so good. As ever in Sweden the acting is modest and exact. The period detail is attractive and impeccable. The colour photography is outstanding. The soundtrack has been prepared with delicacy. There is a satisfying correspondence—isn't there?—in the various parts—rich and poor, sexual and social—linked as they are by themes of pregnancy, hypnotism, health, cleanliness, food and so on. The scenery is pretty. What is it about this film that makes one resist so stubbornly?

It seems to suffer from a calculating charm. For this the photography must take a great deal of the blame, and it's not possible to discuss it without getting down to detail. It means that, for instance, we are to be swished into delight with the smoothness of Harald's shirt as his wife irons it lovingly. The crisp warm whiteness in wide-screen close-up seems an oppressive image of domesticity, as though Bo Widerberg is not speaking to us but shouting delicately. *Adalen '31* is nothing if not delicate. But it is just this excessive refinement which takes the film over the edge into vulgarity. Nor is it even an inappropriateness in applying the lush style of *Elvira Madigan* to a tough action story. That's no crime. It is part of Widerberg's reasonable purpose to shock us with the incongruity of violence in domestic life.

He does it on the whole very well. When the column of marchers is fired on, men fall dead, girls too, women cry with disbelief, blood rudely spurts, clothes are spoilt, and yet it seems an age before any general awareness of what is happening spreads, before anyone can stop the column. The squalor of injury and death is a sharp reminder of the proud cleanliness stressed at the opening of the film. Not only the white shirt, but the white-soaped chin of the father, the well-scrubbed ears of the boys, the shining eyes of the toddler, the taut skin of the mother, scoured like a pan, these are the images offered up too eagerly

to us in this liturgy of hygiene. The firmness of the shooting scene stands out by comparison with the softness of much of the rest.

Widerberg's delicate presentation masks the essential crudeness of the film's manipulation of ideas: so the sadness of alcoholism is anaesthetised by the prettiness of the golden liquor and the out-of-focus glass in the foreground; the economic blow of treating one son's broken leg is softened by our pleasure in the high roof, the long barn, the distant voices, the soaring wings at the scene of the accident; the banal contrast between Kjell's matter-of-fact advice to a pal about erogenous zones and his own romantic behaviour with Anna is camouflaged by the soft little flurry of blossoms he rains down on her shoulders; and so on. In other words, at every real moment of dialectic, the thinness of the idea is disguised by an assault of charm.

Thin ideas aren't necessarily bad ones, or boring ones. Charm is a delicious ingredient. But you cannot present thinness as thickness, nor can you manufacture charm. Even less can you use one to disguise the other. Were it not for the pretty photography, wouldn't we mind more about the way the point is made, that some lads are squabbling with scabs while some bosses' wives are fretting to piano-tuners? And apart from the brilliance of the handling of the scene, isn't there a touch of chilling calculation in the way the soldiers are 'hypnotised' into turning their backs on flashing mirrors while elsewhere Nisse, Kjell's pal, successfully hypnotises a girl at last into nakedness? And is that any more than a pretty conceit? By the time the marching column reaches Lunde we are ready for the muted clamour of birdsong that bursts distantly upon us, token of a sleepy village; we are ready too for the hole in dead Harald's sock; we are more than ready for the elusive bubbles of happiness that baby Martin chases in the gloaming as mother gets the soap out to bring an end to the mourning and a beginning, once more, to the cleaning.

This is a very harsh, even unfair view, perhaps. Is it because with so much talent

"ADALEN '31"



on display—there's no question of that—and with such an affecting subject, Widerberg need only be told to try less hard, or, surfeiting, the appetite may sicken and so die?

Affecting subjects of course bring us back to politics. What one feels about *Adalen* inevitably is that the politics are smothered by the charm. We begin to wonder, impertinently, if Widerberg really cares, amongst all this landscaping, this worry that you'll love them, about the victims, the strikers, the workers, actually.

Costa-Gavras in *Z* (Warner-Pathé) certainly seems to, and he could give a few hints to Widerberg on not getting your elbows into the honey. In the first place he has the assistance of Raoul Coutard, surely now one of the finest all-round cameramen in the world. To compare the unobtrusive beauty of the first conference room scene in *Z*, or the wide-shot of a near-deserted hospital ward, with almost any scene in *Adalen '31* is a good way of gauging the difference in feeling between the two films. There is no invitation to luxuriate in the images. Furthermore, Costa-Gavras has been wise enough to drop the awkward rhapsodising by and about *Z* himself that made the character in the book such a bore. The blandishments are elsewhere.

Briefly the story is, little disguised, a version of the events leading to the murder of Lambrakis in Salonika in 1963. A title warns us that any resemblance between fiction and real life is deliberate. The martyr becomes *Z*, played stoically by Yves Montand, a leftist deputy who pleads for peace and against military support by either the U.S. or Russia. He is the victim of a right-wing organisation in league with the army and police, outside the control of a weak right-centre government. A young and scrupulous examining magistrate (Jean-Louis Trintignant taking up the mantle of stoicism from the dead Montand) pursues the culprits in the teeth of all warnings and indicts even the Chief of Police. Though sentence is passed, a right-wing coup shortly reinstates the guilty ones (we learn from narration at the end) and the innocent are exiled, killed or otherwise proscribed along with Socrates, mini-skirts and other dangers of which the present colonels disapprove.

Costa-Gavras chooses faces well, and the acting (in French—the film was shot in Algeria) is a pleasure. The whole thing zips along with great expertise, apart from some buffoonery at the end, and since the subject is affecting, we are affected. Objections have been raised to the goodness of the goodies and badness of the bad, and indeed the sides are very severely drawn up: deceit, homosexual blackmail, corruption, murder, are laid at the door of the conspirators; a little light adultery, hinted at with *Z*, and a peace worker with no respect for the rules of evidence, is about all you can put against our side. But in the long run the open-faced cry for Peace seems too ingenuous to provoke all this conspiracy, so that the film fails to move us at any real depth.

So what is one to do with these political films? If you narrow the platform you alienate some of the audience. Should it have been just Peace in Greece, or rather Macedonia, and say just for a ten-year-trial moratorium, and with mutual on-site inspections? Would that have carried more ring of conviction? Or if they'd gone the other way and made a film in praise of NATO, or in praise of the colonels, unfairly deposed by an open plebiscite? And besides, nature is only too good at imitating art.

To those who object that the portraits of the colonels are a caricature, there is an obvious answer: who could caricature them?

The central problem of the political film remains: choosing up sides, and the quandary it throws us into. Moral imperatives we can all equivocate about, political imperatives are another thing. It used to be possible to look for political discussion in Godard, but he too has succumbed to imperatives. In their own ways, the one deafeningly, the other delicately, Costa-Gavras and Widerberg have done the same: that ideological simplicity; those intolerable bubbles.

GAVIN MILLAR

THE DAMNED

VISCONTI WANTED to call it *Götterdämmerung*, but that, said Warners, would sound like Wagner. The irony needs no comment: *The Damned* (Warner-Pathé) is possibly the most operatic film ever made. And so, perhaps, if one allows the progression from *Senso* through *Rocco* to *Vaghe Stelle dell' Orsa*, Visconti's definitive film. There is, of course, no reason why films should not be operatic (opera itself is, after all, a hybrid form), but Visconti's latest film suggests aspirations to Wagner's ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the art form uniting all the arts. The source material is eclectic enough, ranging from epic poetry (the *Nibelungenlied*) to theatre (*Macbeth*) and the novel (*Buddenbrooks*).

All of them family histories; and it's not difficult to see that for Visconti it was a short step from the crumbling city and Atridian tragedy of *Vaghe Stelle* to the fall of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Third Reich seen through the eyes of a doomed industrial dynasty. The difference is simply one of context: the difference between the operatic transposition of an ancient Greek tragedy to contemporary Italy and an attempt to encompass the political corruption and decadence which led to the ascendancy of the Nazi Party within an operatic framework—the Krupp family history as Verdi might have envisaged it. Recent historical events do not readily

PHILIPPE NOIRET IN "TOPAZ".



lend themselves to the simplifications of grand opera; and by romanticising remembered history Visconti only obscures his obviously didactic purpose.

It seems to be a currently fashionable preconception that the last days of Weimar were some kind of apotheosis of decadence: sleazy cabaret on the Kurfürstendamm, Dietrich in drag, sinister happenings in Bavarian bierkellers. And decadence, as we know from our history books, lets in dictators. The facts, even as illuminated by such non-historical sources as Isherwood's Berlin stories, were rather more complicated. But Visconti evidently subscribes to this somewhat simplistic view of the state of the German soul on the eve of Hitler's rise to power.

The heady grandiloquence of his conception is apparent from the very beginning. The curtain rises on a family dinner party to celebrate the birthday of Baron von Essenbeck, despotic head of a vast steel empire. Snatches of conversation include ominous references to 'that particular gentleman'. Long shadows are cast round the richly ornamented room as the lights are dimmed for after-dinner entertainment. Martin (Helmut Berger), the Baron's neurotic, glassy-eyed heir apparent, is thrown into garish relief by a spotlight as he takes the stage to deliver a fruity falsetto pastiche of a Dietrich number. 'Today in Germany anything can happen, even the improbable,' someone has said. Enter, from the wings, a piece of news: the Reichstag is burning. As his audience files out to ruminate, the camera stays on Martin, peevishly pulling off his top hat and blonde wig. And before the night is over, Friedrich (Dirk Bogarde), executive director of the steel works and lover of Martin's darkly hovering mother Sophie (Ingrid Thulin), has donned his Macbeth cap and murdered the Baron in his bed, thus conveniently clearing the ground for the cold, calculating Aschenbach (Helmut Griem), the cousin from the S.S., to set the wheels in motion.

The whole sequence is powerfully staged, with Visconti using lighting and colour (lowering expanses of red and brown) dramatically, as he used the highly contrasted black and white in *Vaghe Stelle*. One's objection is simply that the subject doesn't need this heavy stylistic overlay. The film unfolds as a series of inflated set-pieces, and in almost every case the over-charged style is more appropriate to *Salome* than to even a fabricated account of the social and political malaise which produced the Third Reich.

Take, for instance, Visconti's reconstruction of a documented historical event, the 1934 massacre of the S.A. by the S.S. Bodies draped all over a Bavarian lakeside inn; a drunken snatch of Wagner in among the marching songs; carousing storm-troopers lolling about in an orgy of transvestism and homosexuality. With the dawn arrival of the S.S. and the subsequent blood-bath, the camera pans slowly round for a panoramic view of the slaughter, a stylised vision of horror, sickening but also faintly comical because of Visconti's insistence on rubbing our noses in buckets of Technicolor blood. And this night of the long knives was no comedy. Here, one feels, Visconti is using horror not, like Hitchcock or Penn or Godard, with effect but merely for effect.

One could go on to catalogue scenes like this—Martin tormentedly molesting a Jewish child (of course, he doesn't know she is Jewish); the explosive revelation of the truth about the Baron's murder, with a

crazed Sophie falling to her knees as she admits complicity; the camera staggering after Martin as he advances on his mother cowering naked on her bed. The flamboyance is not simply grotesque, but also entirely misplaced in a film which repeatedly and directly refers to its precise historical background. For all Visconti's extravagant flights of fancy—or rather because of them—there is nothing here to compare with the simple, shattering effect of Franz von Gerlach's final assumption of guilt in Sartre's *Altona*. (For a somewhat more dispassionate analysis of the moral disintegration of a similar munitions dynasty, see Gabriel Fielding's brilliant novel *The Birthday King*.)

Enervated by this relentless parade of visual and narrative hyperbole, one hardly notices minor flaws, like the awkwardness of the international cast, the mixed bag of accents, or Maurice Jarre's maddeningly portentous music. For sheer vulgarity, though, there's nothing to match the last act, which deserves to take its place in an anthology of cinematic follies. Quietly delirious, Martin ushers a shaken Friedrich and the ghostly figure of his mother into a garishly lit room for a mock wedding ceremony conducted under a Nazi banner, presents them with a couple of cyanide capsules for a wedding gift, then paces nervously round the room before slowly raising his arm in a Nazi salute over their crumpled bodies. A steel furnace is gradually superimposed over his expressionless face. *La commedia è finita*. At La Scala it would bring the house down.

DAVID WILSON

TOPAZ

HOWEVER ONE CARES to look at it, *Topaz* (Rank) is a puzzle. Why, to start with, has Hitchcock chosen the 1962 Cuban missile crisis as his background, when nobody in his audience will be in any doubt about the outcome? And if the answer is, logically enough (and borne out by the casually discarded newspaper at the end), that he wants us to concentrate instead on the activities of his characters, why does he have so many, why does he allow them so little time to develop as characters, and why does he make his hero so devoid of personality? And if the answer to that is because he wants to demonstrate the global unreliability of human nature, why has he suddenly elected to do this through numberless illustrations instead of through the subtly changing fortunes of one small group, as has always been the case in the past? And if the answer to that is because he wanted realism for a change, instead of the old routine in which his audiences were dazzled through identification with the stars into learning the Hitchcock lesson for themselves, why are the sets alike in their sumptuousness, why are the costumes by Edith Head and Pierre Balmain, and why is Maurice Jarre trembling with lost chords at every glance and every pause?

The answer, finally, can only be that this is Hitchcock, and if he chooses to have an irrelevant close-up of a porcelain flower, to use sketches where photographs would surely have been easier to come by, or to put 'Out of Action' notices on lifts which then work perfectly well, it's because he has earned the right to do so and intends to take full advantage of it. Who are we to complain?

Complaints, of course, have nevertheless been many. In addition to that spot of



"THE DAMNED": INGRID THULIN, HELMUT BERGER, DIRK BOGARDE.

bother about the ending, they have centred chiefly on the monumental tedium of life with Frederick Stafford (we could always rely on wisecracks, on top of the impeccable grooming, from Cary Grant and James Stewart), and on the curiously rambling quality of *Topaz* as it strolls portentously from one non-event to the next. Once over the hurdle, however, of expecting Hitchcock to repeat himself, it is more than possible to become reconciled with the film—even if we will never, surely, be able to rate it as highly as *North by Northwest* among Hitchcock's collection of spy films, or as *Vertigo* or *Marnie* among his psychological thrillers.

Above all, most of its sequences are spellbindingly well made. While flamboyant tracking shots are evidently a thing of the past, the style of *Topaz* is nothing less than perfect for such scenes as the 'silent' long-shot in which a brash little spy (beautifully played in the Martin Balsam manner by Roscoe Lee Browne) talks his way into the Cuban stronghold in Harlem, the cold tension of a sidelong camera prowls as a woman stares into the eyes of the man who is about to kill her, the numerous low-angled shots of characters pacing like caged animals, and the final *tour-de-force*—the unmasking of the master-spy in the conference chamber by a single shot that strolls from close-up to the far end of the enormous room and back again, as good as anything in Hitchcock since *Under Capricorn*.

Primarily *Topaz* is about betrayal, about nobody, ever, being what they seem. Hitchcock has always been concerned with charting the quicksands of human society, but never before has his geographical coverage been so wide (or, indeed, so minute—witness his own appearance as a wheelchair invalid leaping briskly to his feet). Intriguingly enough, when truth does emerge among all the deceit, it is accompanied by bloodshed: blood dripping from her wound unmasks one unfortunate lower

echelon agent, and the discovery leads inexorably to the exposure of the Cuban ringleader (whose body is finally seen in a pool of blood), while subsequently the French spy-ring begins to crumble with a close-up of a bloodied head. And while one could unkindly comment that an equally important *Topaz* theme appears to be the long arm of coincidence (Stafford being spotted in the middle of a Castro rally, Subor apparently enjoying total recall of telephone numbers, the chance meeting with Noiret outside Piccoli's house), the film also derives a valid and enjoyable complexity from its emphases on non-stop travelling, on the dodging of responsibility (unpleasant tasks are constantly being passed on for someone else to handle), on foreign interference, urbane villainy, and marital crisis. Whatever doubts there may be about what drew Hitchcock to the novel by Leon Uris, there is no doubt at all that he enjoyed enormously the rearrangement of it to suit himself.

PHILIP STRICK

WOMEN IN LOVE

KEN RUSSELL'S *Women in Love* (United Artists) has already achieved the dubious distinction of provoking a scathing protest from that redoubtable Lawrence champion F. R. Leavis. But although Leavis' main contention—that 'it's an obscene undertaking to "write it again" for the screen'—seems merely vituperative, the rest of his case does, in effect, point to the crux of the matter. 'No one,' he asserts, 'who had any inkling of the kind of *thing* the novel is, or how the "significance" of a great work of literature is conveyed, or what kind of thing significance is, could lend himself to such an outrage.'

Ken Russell, however, is no stranger to the province of outrage. From the early,

relatively conventional, Prokofiev and Bartok films, he has penetrated the staid tele-genre of the artist's biography with increasing confidence to produce several highly personal works, including *The Debussy Film*, *Dante's Inferno*, *Isadora* and *A Song of Summer*. (Indeed, his career to date might usefully be regarded as that of a latter-day genre specialist where, as in the classical genres, the director trades some executive freedom and variety of material for the opportunity to work steadily and often in a narrow vein.)

Tentatively, one might suggest that what distinguishes these essays is Russell's ability to situate his subjects at varying distances from a contemporary audience—now entering their consciousness, now placing them in biographical and historical perspectives. To achieve this interpretative multiple vision, he has evolved a style ranging on either side of a basically nostalgic period evocation towards, on the one hand, *cinéma-vérité* techniques and, on the other, tableau or pageant forms. Such a virtuoso manner is always risky—it has occasionally seemed little more than an elaborate cloak for his leanings towards conventional romanticism—but at its most assured the result can be richly satisfying.

In the light of this development, it seems inevitable that *Women in Love* should emerge not so much as an 'adaptation' of Lawrence's monumental novel, but as a kind of critical re-creation. From the opening sequence, in which Gudrun and Ursula's half-sophisticated, half-innocent discussion of marriage is deftly punctuated by a passing couple with pram, the film develops as a dialogue between Lawrence's exploration of the freedom and submission of love and Russell's own distinctive vision. The ap-

proach is perhaps most apparent in Alan Bates' superb realisation of Birkin (who, in the novel, embodies much of Lawrence himself), alternating between a skittish, almost balletic presence—dancing on the lakeside, frolicking in the snow in Switzerland—and an earnest, priggish advocacy for the ideal of male comradeship.

The character has, if you like, been 'transposed' (as Leavis would maintain), but, more important, it has been re-created in terms of the film's own complex visual 'significance'. And this surely is the answer to Leavis' strictures. *Of course* the novel has its unique significance and means of signification; it also exists as a cultural fact for both the film's makers and audiences. Merely to simplify and transpose it would be an impertinence. But what Russell and his scriptwriter/producer Larry Kramer have made is a film *about* the novel, rather than *of* it.

Doubtless it will still offend many Lawrentians; for one strand of the film's response to the novel is to find a number of occasions for broad humour—as in a bemused miner's sudden collision with a hanging carcass in the market while Gudrun taunts him provocatively; or when Loerke, the materialistic sculptor, casually flicks ash on to Ursula's plate. But, more generally, it stands or falls as a structure of sharply individualised sequences exploiting the range of Russell's ability to convey his meaning in purely cinematic terms. Thus the ambivalent relationship between Gerald Crich (powerfully, if rather lugubriously, portrayed by Oliver Reed) and Birkin is traced in three precisely defined scenes: their first exchange during a house party, shot in a symmetrical series of intense close-ups; the climactic wrestling match by firelight, set in the bar-

oque gloom of the Crich mansion; and their evasive discussion of impending marriage ambiguously reflected by vast mirrors.

But against the successes must be set a fair number of apparent failures—notably an extended dance sequence (always a temptation for Russell) pushed into total absurdity by Eleanor Bron's heavy caricature of the rich, 'emancipated' Hermione, who involves her guests in an impromptu 'Russian ballet'; and a lyrical slow-motion passage (shot sideways!), in which sheer prettiness seems to get the upper hand.

Perhaps the film's ultimate achievement lies in its creation of an evocative structure which, although deriving from the novel, acquires a life of its own. As the drama moves towards its resolution in the high Tyrol, Gerald's solitary death on a bare mountainside recalls an earlier image of two young lovers entwined in death on a drained lake bed; and in the final scene, Birkin's stubborn insistence that 'two kinds of love' remain possible, as he sits in the domestic glow of the fire with Ursula, ironically recalls the leaping firelight of his wrestling match with Gerald when he came closest to, but failed to achieve, that ideal 'spiritual intimacy'.

IAN LESLIE CHRISTIE

JOHN AND MARY

YEARS AGO, John van Druten wrote *The Voice of the Turtle*, one of those brittle, actorish romantic comedies, full of lines like 'I'm scared . . . scared of being hurt again' and 'this is *our* spring', about a couple deciding to convert a one-night stand into something more permanent. I dimly remember one reviewer pointing out that what held a theatre audience riveted was not so much van Druten's chat, as the alluring sight of a refrigerator on stage producing real ice-cubes, and a real actress scrambling a real egg.

John and Mary (Fox) reawakens that distant echo, partly because there is a vague, updated tang of van Drutenism about the more playful things Dustin Hoffman and Mia Farrow find to say to each other in the same situation; more because Dustin Hoffman's loaded ice-box, his free-range breakfast eggs, and the soufflé he handily whips up, play a hardly less appealing and salient role, dummy in a film which is virtually a two-handed bridge game. John and Mary are not merely a pretty pair: they are a kind of walking Design Centre. He's a furniture designer; she works for an art gallery specialising in primitive bric-à-brac; he picks her up in a bar over an argument about Godard's *Weekend*, which she thinks less well of than he does. Rather more amusingly than intolerably, the film surrounds them with all the taste-indicators—books and magazines and posters and records, among them a copy of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, whose cover, one notes, tones in very nicely with the prevailing set colour.

In fact, Peter Yates' film sets out to be pretty, contemporary and New Yorkerish, a fragment about a couple circling around each other, probing defences, caught up in awkward silences, cooking and chattering and wandering off into speculation or outright fantasy about each other's lives. We get glimpses of Mary's previous affair with a married, cautious politician, and John's involvement with a model who makes a mess of his fussy housekeeping. The model

"WOMEN IN LOVE": ALAN BATES, JENNIE LINDEN.



isn't meant to be a fantasy, but she carries on like one; and a weakness of the film's eye for ingratiation is that its fantasies and its facts come out all of a piece. A film director, for instance, lives in Mary's apartment block: as John fantasises him, he lolls antiquatedly in silk surrounded by girls; as Mary really sees him, he's a black *cinéma-vérité* maniac dashing after his wife with a handheld camera. John Mortimer's script (rather remotely adapted, one gathers, from Mervyn Jones' Hampstead-based novel) has wittier notions than this, but playing the trend game so assiduously means that in the end nothing seems particularly genuine, including John and Mary themselves.

Still, the film finesses rather neatly between reverse twist romantic convention (the trick here being that at the opening they are in bed together, and at the close some twenty-four hours later they are tenderly discovering each other's name) and a slowed-down style, immaculately allusive, which stretches out the feeling of a day, the gaps between meals, rain falling outside the window. After *Bullitt*, with its hard action and hospital and airport locations, Peter Yates was perhaps rather adroit in going for this chic pastel mood piece, with its wispy asperities and tenderesses, and that played-down star quality which turns on the illusion that no one is being as actorish as they really are.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

THE GYPSY MOTHS

JOHN FRANKENHEIMER'S *The Gypsy Moths* (M-G-M) is the kind of film in which it's easy to fail to read the obvious, because we might tend to think of it just as a Hollywood movie and make assumptions about the meaning (or lack of it) which are not necessarily appropriate. The obvious, in this case, is a similarity to Jiri Menzel's *Capricious Summer*. In both films a small troupe of performers arrive in a small town in midsummer and disrupt the lives of a few people in the town. The differences between the two treatments are instructive. Firstly, no one will pretend that Frankenheimer deliberates in the evocation of atmosphere in the way Menzel does. Second, Menzel begins and ends with the townsfolk, Frankenheimer with the performers. Third, Frankenheimer's story is told on a suitably inflated scale, in comparison with Menzel's: his performers are free-fall sky-divers, where Menzel's are a magician who walks a tight-rope, and his wife; and where the magician merely falls off his tightrope, one of the sky-divers actually gets himself killed. But the point of both films lies in what the performers symbolise to the townsfolk.

In a manner that frequently occurs in Frankenheimer, this point is crystallised in a few moments of dialogue, in this case between Burt Lancaster as one of the sky-divers and Deborah Kerr, as the small town professor's wife who is only too willing to let herself be seduced. Before the seduction she tells Lancaster that he terrifies her, and a moment later adds, 'Most ordinary people can't help but respond to some excitement in their lives.' He: 'Even if it terrifies them?' She: 'Yes.' The morning after the seduction, he asks her to leave her husband and come away with him. She is furious and refuses.

'I imagine you're the kind of man who always has the best reasons for everything you do. Do you think that's possible for all of us?'

The pre-title sequence gives us a taste of aerial photography with all the stops pulled, which doesn't recur until the latter part of the film. We drop out of the 'plane with the divers, we hold hands with them while falling. We share the tension as one, so far unidentified diver goes plummeting towards the earth, to pull his ripcord at the last possible moment. The functionalism of Frankenheimer's style becomes obvious when we get to the ground and discover that it was Lancaster, and that he clearly takes some kind of extreme delight in tempting fate. After the titles, the movie settles into a deliberate slow pacing of events, this time at ground level (things are less exciting than in the air).

When we get back into the air we think we understand Lancaster's character, but we don't. And as he falls towards the earth with a vacant look on his face, and this time, in a sequence of immense physical tension, fails to pull the ripcord, we, like everyone in the film, are totally mystified. Did he have 'the best reasons' for doing it? We don't even know if he knew what he was doing.

In the air, there are intimate shots of the team which make us forget about the audience below and instead share fully their experience. On the ground Frankenheimer reverts to a typical framing (much used for dramatic moments in *The Fixer*, for example) where a couple or a group in animated conversation are held in close-up, one of the characters in big close-up profile at one side of the frame. This dynamic composition emphasises the strife among the team on the ground as opposed to their unity in the air, so that it's appropriate, after the death of one of them, that the other two should split up.

My account hardly does justice to Frankenheimer's special talent for tying up the story more carefully than many other directors of an ostensibly genre movie like this would bother to do. Even in a light work, Frankenheimer allows no loose ends. There are fine performances from Gene Hackman and Scott Wilson, as the other two sky-divers.

MICHAEL CHANAN

THE STERILE CUCKOO

SYMPATHETIC, I SUPPOSE, is the word for *The Sterile Cuckoo* (Paramount), which marks the debut as director of Robert Mulligan's producer, Alan J. Pakula, in a manner markedly reminiscent of Mulligan's. Like *Love With the Proper Stranger* and *Baby the Rain Must Fall*, it is unassuming and alert, attentive in a pleasingly undemonstrative way to idiosyncrasies of character, and liable to go astray, not too disastrously, at awkward moments.

There is a charming scene, for instance, when two young lovers repair to a motel to shed their virginity. Predictably, it is grey and cheerless and the heating won't work; unpredictably, the girl is not so easily to be distracted from her purpose. 'Would you like to peel the tomato?' she asks demurely; and having gently directed the stripping operations, leaps out of the cold into bed to snuggle down happily—after thoughtfully



"JOHN AND MARY": MIA FARROW, DUSTIN HOFFMAN.

retrieving her spectacles—to watch the revelation of his masculinity. The only trouble with the sequence, beautifully written and played, is that the characters say it's cold, they act as though it were cold, but it doesn't *feel* cold. Not for the first or only time in the film, which often veers dangerously close to Lelouch territory with pastoral romps and lyrical joys, Pakula tends to accent charm at the expense of accuracy.

Pert, ebullient as a Boxer puppy but with huge dark eyes revealing the depth of her vulnerability, Liza Minnelli plays a cheerful extrovert who sets her sights on a quiet, withdrawn boy (Wendell Burton) as soon as she sets eyes on him on the bus taking them to their adjacent colleges. Pursuit begins when she spins a tearful tale about family bereavement to a pair of complaisant nuns in order to secure a seat beside him; continues when she winks him out of his hermitage at college, dismissing everyone else, all the friends she doesn't want and he doesn't have, as 'a bunch of weirdos'; and culminates in a touching love affair which leads to the motel and beyond.

The twist in the tale is the gradual, and credible, revelation of the difference between outside and inside. Despite her air of unshakeable self-confidence, she turns out to be forlorn, insecure, utterly dependent on her relationship with him and content to remain forever in their private Garden of Eden; he begins more and more to chafe at an exclusivity he isn't ready for, as society slowly surfaces round him and draws him into its orbit. Although this note of tragedy introduced at the end is perhaps a trifle too weighty for the film, Pakula cunningly reinforces it by his deployment of both settings and minor characters to settle the boy more and more securely into his natural place in the world, while the girl disappears into a shadowy abyss of solitude. And at times, Liza Minnelli echoes with astonishing fidelity that catch in the throat which was Judy Garland's trade-mark. Not so much in voice or appearance (though that, too) as in gesture and movement: a lost, puzzled figure standing at the side of the road, or holding up a hand to mask her bewilderment as her lover announces the end.

TOM MILNE

BOOK REVIEWS

THE HAUNTED SCREEN, by Lotte H. Eisner. Illustrated. (Thames and Hudson, 84s.)

THE HAUNTED SCREEN, seventeen years old and with additions inserted in 1965, remains as fresh, lively and positive in English translation as was its original, *L'Ecran Démoniaque*. One does not have to agree with it all, but it gently lubricates memory and revives responses that one would imagine had long since died away.

You have to turn to Kracauer (*From Caligari to Hitler*) for the facts in their social setting and to history books for the horrid reality of that shameful time of inflation which reached its climax in September 1924 when you received one new reichsmark for every 1,000,000,000,000 (twelve noughts) old marks that you handed in. Here you will find none of that, only a sharp, deep impression of the more significant films that emerged during that period and its aftermath. It is a series of personal impressions, the outstanding personal assessment of silent German cinema.

The work is based on first-hand contemporary experience and therein lies its strength. Miss Eisner began her career as a young film journalist in Berlin and lived there throughout the period of which she writes: she only left when the Nazis came to power.

At most only half of the hundred or so films discussed here have circulated even to a limited extent in Britain, and therefore it was a wise decision to insert close on three hundred still pictures alongside the text to which they refer. The reader should bear in mind that these are only a hundred from among, say, two thousand films made in Germany between 1918 and 1933. From 1917, when General Ludendorff established the UFA organisation partly with government money, it was German official policy to promote film production and export as a means of improving the waning German image in foreign eyes. Priority was given to the building of film studios, the manufacture of equipment and the development of craftsmanship, of studio trickwork of high, advancing quality. By its nature the film negative in general use, known as orthochromatic, was only sensitive to cold blue and violet and increasingly insensitive through the warmer colours until reds were as impenetrable as black. The colour in natural and urban exteriors was virtually uncontrollable, and in the expert opinion of the time art in cinema lay as much in the design and control of the objects seen as in the way they were seen. Hence the term *art director*. Eisenstein's deliberate refuting of this convention in *Strike* and *Potemkin* shook the film world almost as much as his introducing montage, or Russian cutting as it was first called. He urged the more adventurous out into the light of day and the reality of existing surroundings.

But meanwhile this hothouse tendency in German film-making was encouraged by the solid success of the German theatre dominated by Reinhardt. The mood of the defeated nation was one of despair, of being the victims of a malignant Destiny and of being unable to do much about it. It was a surreal time in which wealth was come by and shed as fast as possible, since its value was diminishing as fast as a taximeter running in reverse. To prosper, you had to have an account in Zurich or New York. Big business was concerned only with foreign sales: the German market was negligible. The formality and discipline of the German character alone forestalled Communism. Instead it succumbed first to American aid, and when that crashed, to Nazism.

Those who believe that film is a reflection of twentieth century history can find in this remarkable book and in the films which it describes a compulsive impression of the consequences of the Treaty of Versailles.

Miss Eisner is refreshingly unsentimental about the films which we eventually began to see. British exhibitors banned all German films from British screens for four years after the war. We owe a debt to Ivor Montagu and Sidney (now Lord) Bernstein for introducing the works of Wiene, Lang, Murnau, Galeen, Lubitsch, Pabst and the like through their Film Society, and thence to a small sector of the British public. The impact of the films was so strong in their

strange novelty that we often overestimated their quality, and it is salutary for instance to be reminded that Wiene's work on *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* was second-rate, that Mayer and Janowitz's original script and the expressionist distortions of the set designs were worthy of far better film direction than Wiene provided.

Carl Mayer and his influence recurs all through the series, just as Zavattini seems to hold neo-realism together. The authors of these films were not necessarily the directors. Sometimes the designers dominated. It is interesting to learn about the German system of *regiensitzungen*, planning sessions around the script and the designs at which everyone including the lighting cameraman discussed and often modified them before agreeing on the final form of the production some weeks before the sets were due to be built.

One could wish that Miss Eisner had given more space to the later silent and the early German sound film. She seems more interested in *chiaroscuro* than in daylight. I am sure she underestimates the late silent *People on Sunday*, that charming light natural comedy on which Robert Siodmak, Billy Wilder, Fred Zinnemann and Edgar Ulmer cut their first sprockets.

And without the German flair for studio craftsmanship, goodness knows what would have happened to the early sound film. Here the Germans led the world in the films they made in Berlin, Paris and London. While the Americans, the French and the British were grinding out canned plays and all-talking pictures, Tobis were making musicals in London, backing René Clair in Paris, and pouring imaginative sound into *World Melody*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Kameradschaft* and a host of dramas and musicals in Berlin.

But this is not a history book: it is essentially a personal record. And the person is well worth getting to know.

THOROLD DICKINSON

SPLIT FOCUS, by Peter Hopkinson. Illustrated. (Hart-Davis £5 5s.)

HARDLY A DAY PASSES without some television programme using stock footage of World War II. I've often thought that the memoirs of the men who shot that material would be as fascinating and historically relevant as the memoirs of those involved in the war. To go into battle fully armed requires a certain amount of nerve. But to go into battle armed only with a camera takes courage of a special sort. Peter Hopkinson vividly conveys what so many combat cameramen went through to enable us to watch the war from the comfort of our armchairs:

"That night was for me an incoherent and terrifying shambles... An ammunition truck disintegrated in a blaze of exploding light, revealing our nakedness on the exposed desert all the more. In the face of this devastating German defence, everyone dug in; and I scraped as best I could a shallow trough out of the unyielding ground in which to press down what seemed to be my far too conspicuous self. Nothing in life has ever surprised me more than the realisation that, having done so, I actually fell asleep for more than an hour in the midst of this inferno. To have something immediate to do, and on which to concentrate, gives the soldier something to hold on to. For a cameraman, who can only work in daylight, such a baptism of fire was at the very least something of an ordeal. All I could do was hope to survive until the rising sun lit up some sort of scene of action that could be filmed in the morning."

Peter Hopkinson's career began with home movies, and the opening chapter of *Split Focus* crystallises his childhood love for the cinema. Memories are evoked with an almost poetic nostalgia; as one can recapture autumn with talk of woodsmoke and russet leaves, so Hopkinson recaptures his early infatuation with the scent of film cement, the sepia glow of tinted celluloid, and the hypnotic rattle of the projector handle. This obsession led him, at the age of sixteen, into the film industry. It also marked him apart from his contemporaries, for few British technicians in 1936 bore much affection for their job. How often one hears from older technicians, "I get enough of films during the day. Why should I go to the cinema in my spare time?"

From the camera department at Ealing—with Gracie Fields and George Formby—Hopkinson went to Denham, where he worked with one of his idols, King Vidor, on *The Citadel*. During Korda's *The Thief of Baghdad*, war broke out, Hopkinson was called up, and *Split Focus* moves from the introduction into Part One of its remarkable story.

Following the German invasion of Russia, Hopkinson was sent, with a single-lens Newman Sinclair camera, to film on the frontiers of the Russian war. 'Somewhere in Persia' he spotted an LMS locomotive which, he felt, would make an ideal opening for his film. He clambered on to the roof of Ahwaz Station to secure an impressive set-up. "Just as I was stepping off the ladder, I felt

something give just beneath my shoulder, and the sudden easing of a weight. The leather strap of my camera case had broken. The Newman Sinclair crashed on to concrete thirty feet below." The Middle East had been scoured for this, Hopkinson's one and only camera. "It was my only weapon of war, and to use it I had been sent ten thousand miles. Now it lay thirty feet below me, smashed. I very nearly followed it."

Recovering from the shock, he decided that if the Royal Engineers could lift a 70-ton British locomotive on to Persian tracks, they could repair his camera. They could, and they did. Hopkinson's resourcefulness, and his courage, are reflected throughout the book. My only quarrel is with his modesty. He goes through fire and brimstone at Alamein, in Greece and behind the lines with Yugoslav partisans. He tells us what happened, and he details the politics and strategy behind the events. But I wanted more of his own feelings, his own anxieties. Cameraman to the last, Hopkinson remains an almost anonymous observer.

Split Focus, however, is not merely a collection of incidents. Hopkinson aims at a higher target. He not only covers the war, and the post-war years with *March of Time*, he also throws light on to the political maelstrom of the period. With one eye on the viewfinder, the other on the implications of the events he is covering, it's surprising that his *Split Focus* hasn't led to myopia. But Hopkinson is a film-maker. He never fails to provide an establishing shot before cutting to close-ups.

The value of this book is graphically conveyed in an open letter to Hopkinson from John Grierson: "I just can't think of any actuality man who has written up his story with the many-faceted interest in film-making—and in *affairs*—that you have. Every cineaste is going to learn something from your constant awareness of political occasion and, not least, from your great sense of independence and justice too. I liked especially your remark that you lost your innocence when you saw them shooting down the Greek partisans. I was older than you; I wasn't surprised; not even when Churchill acted *against* the wishes of his Western allies. I found your account of your relations with *March of Time* very valuable as an introduction to the central problem of giving depth and form to news coverage. In fact your final argument as to the need not for size and spectacle (Cinerama) but for intensive inquiry, wide sympathies, and integrity of purpose in your film-making, makes a far better guide to the schools than any I have lately seen."

Split Focus is an expensive book, but you will get your money's worth if you have a serious interest in motion pictures—if only by being exposed to the spirit behind the book. A spirit of uncompromising devotion.

KEVIN BROWNLOW

INGMAR BERGMAN, by Robin Wood. Illustrated. (Studio Vista 15s.)

CRITICS THRIVE on disagreement, and Ingmar Bergman is probably the director about whom they have disagreed more than any other. The swinging critical pendulum, however, seems to have had splendidly little effect on the man himself, for all that the artist-versus-critic theme is given due space in his work. Although Bergman has grown steadily more conscious of involvement in international tensions during twenty-five years as a film-maker (the director of *The Shame* could hardly be accused of isolationism), he has contrived at the same time to remain an impregnable stylist, an incorruptible Scandinavian, and an unavoidable *éminence grise*. What possibly irritates his detractors most of all is that his career has glided sublimely on its way, consistently unpredictable, no matter what anyone chooses to write about it; it seems peculiarly tactless that a personality so isolated should have so much understanding, so much variety, so much soul.

Scorning the opposition, whom he regards as having sunk to 'a level where debate becomes impossible,' Robin Wood writes as an ardent admirer. Superlatives abound with an excess of freedom, but while his book is unlikely to convert the infidels or to distract the faithful it should nevertheless constitute for the agnostics an invaluable summary of the issues at stake. Wherever his emotions may be leading him, Mr. Wood is now an expert at taking films apart to find what makes them tick, and even if the pieces don't sometimes fit back together again so well, the exercise is always stimulating. Anyone at a loss after encountering the complexities of Bergman's metaphors—and after one viewing, that means most audiences—will find Mr. Wood's analyses readable, informed, and enlightening. Which said, due warning should be given that Mr. Wood can also be stuffy, pedantic (he carefully gives the exact translation of a number of Bergman titles as an opening note), and, now and then, just plain silly. Commenting, for example, on the proximity of *Lesson in Love* and *Sawdust and Tinsel*, he finds it necessary to observe that 'a little reflection on the complexities of an artist's creative life, or even on the complexities of human life itself,

should be sufficient to remind us that this proximity is not really so surprising.' Such schoolroom lecturing conveys an odd impression of his opinion of his readers.

After an introductory chapter on the general characteristics of Bergman's work, with a slightly uneasy but certainly honourable attempt to relate it to the rise and fall of the various actresses appearing in his films, the book plunges into *Frenzy*, nips with understandable but disappointing brevity through the following six years ('*Port of Call* need not detain us long' strikes as a particularly curious avoidance of duty), and is burrowing into *Summer Interlude* in next to no time. The analysis of this early masterpiece, after a pretentious first paragraph (a recurring hazard), is then extremely good, and the output of the first half of the 1950s is also usefully and efficiently considered—although as with his book on Hitchcock, Mr. Wood is evidently far more keen to come to grips with more recent works than to investigate too deeply the calibre of the preliminaries. He is scrupulous, however, in his attention to Bergman's musical references, and the Mozartian parallels in *Smiles of a Summer Night* and the links with Bach in *Wild Strawberries* are refreshingly well defined. It is no surprise to find later that *The Silence* and *Hour of the Wolf* are expertly examined in terms of orchestration; the links between *The Magic Flute* and the disintegration of poor Johan Borg are unhesitatingly tried and tested.

Less space, sadly, is devoted to Bergman's sense of humour, which tends to leave Mr. Wood faintly perplexed. Any levity on the part of Bergman's characters is liable to be termed 'embarrassing' or 'annoying', as when he takes the director to task for the cartoon in *Summer Interlude*, or for over-exposing Bibi Andersson's personification of innocence in four adjoining productions. While recognising, for example, that *Lesson in Love* has been grossly neglected, Mr. Wood writes about it with such gravity that its delicate ironic balance—somewhere between Ibsen and Molière—doesn't get through at all. And any investigation of this film that doesn't refer to the two pivotal tracking shots (one through the woods, the other by the canal) on which it is balanced, is surely a continuation of neglect. Mr. Wood's probably unconscious preference for Bergman at his most sober must account for the subsequent extraordinary dismissal of *The Face* and *The Devil's Eye* (two paragraphs only), which constitutes the book's major weakness. Not, of course, that these two titles—along with *Now About These Women*, upon which Mr. Wood makes brief but acceptable assault—use elements of comedy

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Mrs. Diana Napier Tauber, widow of Richard Tauber, would be grateful to receive any information from private collectors who may possess copies of the following films:

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for anything but deliberately threadbare disguise. What is surprising is the writer's reluctance to become entangled closely in the removal of that disguise, an exercise he pursues unflinchingly with seemingly more impenetrable material.

Once launched upon the trilogy, however, Mr. Wood is clearly and contentedly on home ground—still prone to autobiography ('Satyajit Ray told me once . . .') and rather startling interjections of woe ('which of us can say he is sound and whole?'), but demonstrably able to tackle anything Bergman cares to throw. His description of *Winter Light* is really splendid, and the level is maintained for much of the writing on *Persona* and *Hour of the Wolf*, even if his essays are hardly as definitive as is claimed by the book's cover. After these, the piece on *Shame* is something of a blow, rambling hysterically through Yeats and Godard to conclude that the work is 'one of the greatest films of the last decade' (always a suspect statement, as well as unhelpful). Mr. Wood's own identification with the film is made vividly clear, and this is basically the trouble; his voice occasionally drowns out Bergman's.

A comprehensive biography and bibliography, a continually apposite choice of stills—and plenty more remaining to be said about Bergman's impenetrable genius: it's a book that offers an excellent launching pad for further critical rockets, both in the classroom and in the film journals, and as such should fulfil its purpose admirably.

PHILIP STRICK

RICHARD GRIFFITH: 1912-1969

Richard Griffith, the American film historian and critic, was killed last October in a car accident. Mr. Griffith was co-author with Paul Rotha of the revised edition (1949, and later editions) of The Film Till Now, and collaborated with him on the third edition of Documentary Film (1952). He also wrote The Movies (with Arthur Mayer), The World of Robert Flaherty, and Anatomy of a Motion Picture, a study of Preminger's Anatomy of a Murder. During the war he had worked, among other things, on Frank Capra's Why We Fight series. In 1951 he succeeded Iris Barry as Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library in New York, a post from which he retired in 1965.

THOROLD DICKINSON writes: I can only write of Richard Griffith out of personal experience. When my wife and I landed as total strangers at the UN in New York in October 1956 during the turmoil of the Suez crisis and the Hungarian revolution, Richard showed generosity and practical imagination in his welcome and never expected any return. Three times he opened his auditorium at the Museum of Modern Art for my benefit, to show a programme of my own work to a full audience, later to give a world première to *Power Among Men*, produced while I was at the UN, and again to launch the BFI Free Cinema programme in conjunction with Contemporary Films Inc., which was introduced by a taped speech from Sir Michael Balcon. That occasion sparked off a tidy revenue for the Production Fund. Through FIAF he imported a film from Brussels that we needed to study. We used the book and film libraries. We bought stock shots for UN film. He was always on hand to cope with our needs in those days.

Everything he did in an informal, unassuming way, aided by his resourceful assistant, Margareta Akermark. Between them they made the place on 53rd Street a positive magnet to which one gravitated for stimulation and laughter. People like this cut through the myths, clichés and prejudices which disturb international relations. They just live, behave and act civilised. It was good to know Richard.

SIGHT AND SOUND

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CORRESPONDENCE

The Appointment

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—Since I saw and wrote about Sidney Lumet's *The Appointment* (SIGHT AND SOUND, Autumn 1969), it has fallen into the hands of the executives at M-G-M, who after the reaction at Cannes last spring decided to re-edit the film before releasing it. I have not seen their shrunken version, but I suspect that the film is no longer the tense, subtle study of the destructiveness of personal obsession that I described. Lumet's version has been shown in Asia and South America, but it is the M-G-M mutant that will be released in America and Europe early in 1970.

I think your readers would be interested in this correspondence I received from Sidney Lumet:

"Thank you for letting me see the article. I actually don't fully know what has been happening with the re-cutting of *The Appointment*. After the Cannes debacle, Metro ran another preview in California which I attended. I don't usually go to previews but I wanted to see how wrong I was. Some problems appeared to me at the screening but they did not seem too severe. The audience seemed bothered by some excesses and in certain moments belief broke down; still, they were extremely attentive and the film seemed to me to hold together like a rock. . . .

At a meeting the next day I tried to get them to let me re-cut, which for me would have taken a very short time. Contractually my re-cutting rights had expired in terms of the delivery date of the picture. Margaret Booth, who still performs the function of editor-in-chief for Metro (she was Irving Thalberg's editor), has re-cut it and I saw it about three weeks ago. . . . The object has been to make it into a star-crossed lovers sort of romantic film: the entire first suicide is out so that it moves without a complete cyclic repetition that to me was a very important part of what Jim and I were trying to say; the scene with the old lady on the train has been removed; the helicopter shot has been chopped; some stock travelling shots have been added, so that in total I can't really tell now whether the picture makes any sense at all.

There is never much point, it seems to me, in trying to cop a plea. One knows what one is getting into when working with a major company, and God knows this is not the first time that this has happened. They were panicked by the reaction at Cannes, not knowing Cannes as the rest of us do (on *Long Day's Journey into Night*—which is to me my best work—half the audience in Cannes walked out). They are a new management and they have an extraordinary number of other problems.

It is such an old story and such a sad one that one cannot even be depressed, just sort of numbing despair sets in and one goes ahead and does one's next film. . . ."

Anyone who is optimistic about the 'new Hollywood' should be reminded that in just the last year, at least four major films—Reisz's *Isadora*, Boorman's *Hell in the Pacific*, Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, and now *The Appointment*—have been sheared and altered by the studios. The film scholars who are working to retrieve and restore old movies would do us all a service by working as hard to preserve the directors' versions of these films before they are permanently lost.

Beverly Hills, California.

Yours faithfully,
STEPHEN FARBER

Targets

SIR,—Penelope Houston's kind remarks (in 'Hitchcockery', SIGHT AND SOUND, Autumn 1968) about my picture, *Targets*, were based on the complete 90-minute version which, unfortunately, is not the one her readers were able to see when the picture was released in England recently, on a double-bill with *Goodbye Columbus*. At that time, the film ran only 76 minutes.

The reason given to me by Paramount—after the fact—was that the ABC circuit refused to book the two films together unless their combined running time was shortened to allow for a normal 'candy break'. This simple answer is particularly ironic as we had all been worried some months before that the picture might be cut by the British censor because of its violence. However, it had been passed without cuts and given an 'X' certificate. In fact, it still carried this rating on its release, for none of the deletions had anything to do with violence.

No, candy did us in and, appropriately, all the 14 minutes cut were from the lighter side of the picture, among them the two biggest laughs in the movie. This was especially distressing since the story is essentially so grim and any relief was welcome and necessary. The deletions all involved Boris Karloff, and I was perhaps most upset by this since his performance was so good. Several of Miss Houston's London colleagues commented favourably on his work, and I couldn't help feeling they would have been more impressed had they seen the entire performance.

The movie is, after all, a story of two people moving inexorably toward a fateful encounter. Though through sheer content, the sniper's sections dominate even in the full version, a London friend who has seen both told me the picture was 'thrown considerably out of balance' by the cuts.

The history of the movies is filled with far greater butcheries than this—and much more lamentable ones—but I believe each one, no matter how minor, should be noted, argued and fought in the hope that every struggle somehow reduces even further the possibilities of such things happening. Despite everything, I like to think we are winning.

Yours faithfully,
PETER BOGDANOVICH

Rome.

Censorship in Holland

SIR,—Referring to Neville Hunnings' remarks on film censorship in Holland (SIGHT AND SOUND, Autumn 1969), I can inform you that in the beginning of 1940 a bill was introduced to alter the Cinema law. Because of war and occupation no conclusion was reached. In 1948 a second bill was introduced and withdrawn after heavy criticism. In the meantime (1946) a commission was installed to advise on a new law, which led to a bill that was withdrawn in 1949. In 1961 a bill was introduced and—I am well aware that I am becoming monotonous—withdrawn. In 1966 a commission was installed which in 1969 produced the report Mr. Hunnings referred to.

You will understand that Mr. Hunnings' remark that 'the report apparently came out of the blue' will make the Dutch smile a bit; somewhat sourly so as it also makes us aware of our shortcomings.

Mr. Hunnings mentioned the recommendation to abolish film censorship for adults and the comparison, made by the commission, of film censorship with the European Convention of Human Rights. The other recommendations may also be of interest to your readers. A short summary:

—The Cinema law originates from a negative valuation of film and

cinema. A more positive appreciation is desirable.

—The changes in religious, moral, cultural and social views gave rise to the opinion that, less than in the past, a need for governmental control is felt.

—Through the development of television, film censorship cannot offer a satisfactory system of governmental control.

—No provision should be made to maintain municipal censorship of films admissible to youngsters. The burgomaster should, however, have the power to prevent excesses.

—The task of a new body will be the examination of films, admissible to youngsters. Experts on child psychology and pedagogy should form part of the body.

—Institutions furthering the level of film and film appreciation should be subsidised by the government.

—If films, in spite of their cultural value, do not get a theatrical distribution, a financial stimulant should be given to make such a distribution possible.

Yours faithfully,
G. J. VAN DER MOLEN

The Hague.

Cinéastes

SIR,—I am grateful to Mr. Rotha for elucidating the origins of the English use of the term *cinéaste*. I should also be grateful to hear from any of your readers who may have properly authenticated examples of the use of the term in English since 1939 to mean 'film-maker' and of the term being used in French or Italian to mean 'film enthusiast' or 'lover of films' (perhaps the American equivalent would be 'buff').

Yours faithfully,
NEVILLE MARCH HUNNINGS

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Purley CR2 2JB.

Park Row

SIR,—Ian Christie states that Samuel Fuller's *Park Row* had not been shown in this country before the Edinburgh Festival retrospective.

This is not in fact the case. I well remember seeing the film in Leicester in the early 1950s in a double feature at an independent cinema, so presume it must have had some sort of floating release. Having just entered journalism at the time, I was intrigued by its re-creation of American newspaper life, and I imagine it is still one of the best films of its kind.

Yours faithfully,
ROY K. MARTIN

Headington, Oxford.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN LINDSAY BROWN is a 25-year-old graduate of St. Andrews University, now teaching English at Cumbernauld High School. . . . KEVIN BROWNLOW is a film historian (*The Parade's Gone By*), film director (*It Happened Here*) and film editor (*The Charge of The Light Brigade*). . . . IAN LESLIE CHRISTIE teaches film at the College of Art, Derby, and is a contributor to the Cambridge magazine *Cinema*. . . . CARLOS CLARENS, born in Cuba and educated in Havana and at the Sorbonne, is author of the book *Horror Movies*. Has contributed to many film magazines, and is at present working on a book on George Cukor. . . . PHILIP FRENCH is a BBC radio producer, regular contributor to the *New Statesman* and *Financial Times*, author of *The Movie Moguls*, co-editor of *Age of Austerity 1945-51*, and a member of the BFI Production Board. . . . CLAIRE JOHNSTON is a lecturer on the BFI lecture panel, and a free-lance writer. . . . JOSEPH MCBRIDE is a newspaper reporter and former television cameraman. He edited *Persistence of Vision*, a collection of film criticism published by the Wisconsin Film Society Press, and has written a book on Orson Welles. Plans soon to direct a feature film from an original screenplay. . . . DEREK MALCOLM has been on the features staff of *The Guardian* since 1963 and has just succeeded Richard Roud as London film critic. . . . ERIC RHODE is a regular broadcaster on arts subjects, film critic of *The Listener*, and author of *Tower of Babel*. . . . PAUL WARSHOW is an American writer who graduated from Columbia's School of General Studies in 1966. Has written for *Commentary* and other magazines. . . . MICHAEL WILMINGTON works at the Playboy Club in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Acted in a movie and more than thirty plays at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he also directed *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

UNITED ARTISTS for *Alice's Restaurant*, *Ned Kelly*, *The Revolutionary*, *Women in Love*.
20th CENTURY-FOX for *Je t'aime, je t'aime*, *John and Mary*, *Run Shadow, Run*.
PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Adalen '31*, *Medium Cool*.
WARNER-PATHE for *The Damned*.
COLUMBIA PICTURES for *Easy Rider*.
M-G-M for *Point Blank*.
RANK/UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *Topaz*.
C.I.R.O. for *Hell in the Pacific*.
CINECENTA/KAISER-FILM for *Artistes at the Top of the Big Top: Disorientated*.
KEVIN BILLINGTON/WARNER-PATHE for *The Rise and Rise of Michael Rimmer*.
MIRISCH/PHALANX/UNITED ARTISTS for *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*.
PLANET FILMS/UNIFRANCE for *La Voie Lactée*.
ACADEMY/PARC FILM for *A Gentle Creature*.
ACADEMY/CINEMA S.P.A./ITAL NOLEGGIO for *One Fine Day*.
ACADEMY/CONNOISSEUR FILMS/UNIFRANCE for *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*.
ACADEMY/CONNOISSEUR FILMS/AJMY PRODUCTIONS for *Le Signe du Lion*.
CONNOISSEUR FILMS/CARLOS CLARENS for *La Collectionneuse*.
CINEMA CENTER FILMS for *The Rook*.
KESTREL FILMS/ANOUSHKA FILMS for *Le Gai Savoir*.
UNIFRANCE for *Pierre et Paul*.
FILMEL/C.I.C.C./FIDA CINEMATOGRAFICA for *Le Samourai*.
ANCINEX/MADELEINE FILMS for *Destroy, She Says*.
FILMS CORONA/FONO ROMA for *L'Armée des Ombres*.
TECHNIQUE ET EXPLOITATION CINEMATOGRAFIQUE for *La Trêve*.
MAG BODARD for *Un Soir . . . Un Train*.
SOZOSHA PRODUCTIONS/ACADEMY for *Death by Hanging*.
ROB HOUWER FILMS, MUNICH for *Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria*.
CESKOSLOVENSKY FILM for *The Joke*.
JOHN LLEWELLYN for *Events*.
PAT HOLLAND/DAVID SPEECHLEY for *The Hornsey Film*.
STEVEN DWOSKIN for *Chinese Checkers*.

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FILM GUIDE

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars.

***ADALEN '31 (Paramount) Bo Widerberg's lyrical reconstruction of the historic Swedish strike and violent repressions that led to the inauguration of the Social Democrat régime. Seductive photography—an overt homage to the painter Renoir—works dialectically with the events to affirm the need for balancing instinctive quests for personal happiness with disciplined political action. (Peter Schildt, Roland Hedlund, Kerstin Tidelius. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

AGE OF CONSENT (Columbia) Curiosity from the ever unpredictable Michael Powell, about a painter looking for peace on the Great Barrier Reef and encountering a noisy assembly of Australian primitives. Back to nature daydream, played with an intelligent rasp by James Mason, with interludes of bizarre raucousness. (Helen Mirren, Jack MacGowan. Technicolor.)

****ALICE'S RESTAURANT (United Artists) Arlo Guthrie's remarkable L.P. (the story of his rejection as unfit to fight in Vietnam after being jailed as a litterbug) brilliantly visualised and expanded by Arthur Penn into a sympathetic, but not at all complaisant, exploration of the world of dropping-out. (Arlo Guthrie, Pat Quinn, James Broderick. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

BED SITTING ROOM, THE (United Artists) Richard Lester's sprawling adaptation of the zany extravaganza by Spike Milligan and John Antrobus about the survivors of the Bomb. Michael Hordern and Arthur Lowe in good form, but the lunatic logic of goonery doesn't survive the transition from stage to screen. (Rita Tushingham, Ralph Richardson. DeLuxe Colour.)

CHAPPAQUA (Hunter) Conrad Rooks' semi-autobiographical diary of a drug-addict's dreams, nightmares and hallucinations while undergoing a cure in a Paris clinic darkly presided over by Jean-Louis Barrault. Intended to be admonitory, but the woolly combination of LSD images, mysticism, Ravi Shankar and William Burroughs most likely to appeal to the already initiated. (Part Eastman Colour.)

*DAMNED, THE (Warner-Pathé) Visconti in full operatic flood for a story of corruption, depravity and Machiavellian intrigue among the very odd members of a munitions dynasty at the dawn of the Third Reich. Set pieces staged with grandiose vulgarity; international cast swamped by extravagance bordering on the grotesque. (Dirk Bogarde, Ingrid Thulin, Helmut Berger. Eastman Colour, Panavision.) Reviewed.

**DUET FOR CANNIBALS (Contemporary) Susan Sontag's Swedish-made film, about a tolerably diabolical couple and the destructive games they play with a younger pair who stray into their orbit. Predictably cerebral, and quite a feat for a first film in an alien tongue, though perhaps finally rather a recondite excursion. (Agneta Ekman, Adriana Asti, Lars Ekborg.)

GOODBYE MR. CHIPS (M-G-M) Skilful performance by Peter O'Toole as James Hilton's pedantic old stick of a schoolmaster with a yen to be loved; but Leslie Bricusse's music (in which it is difficult to distinguish one song from another) is poured all over it like soup, and the pace would shame a palsied snail. (Petula Clark, Michael Redgrave; director, Herbert Ross. Metrocolor, Panavision.)

**GOOD GUYS AND THE BAD GUYS, THE (Warner-Pathé) Rambling, shaggy-dog Western, sporadically very funny, and with excellent performances by Robert Mitchum and George Kennedy as the good guy and the bad guy who join forces against the baleful inroads of progress on the West. Too many flat interludes, though. (David Carradine, Tina Louise; director, Burt Kennedy. Technicolor, Panavision.)

****GOTO, L'ILE D'AMOUR (Contemporary) Stunning Borowczyk film, his first live-action feature, in which he pins his characters down like Buñuel's entomological specimens but lets their emotions run free in a great operatic cry for love and the difficulty of achieving it. (Ligia Branice, Pierre Brasseur, Guy Saint-Jean. Part in Eastman Colour.)

**GREETINGS (Eagle) Off-beat, fragmentary adventures of three draft-dodging drop-outs in New York. Realistically witty dialogue and consistently comic encounters build to a despairing black comedy mosaic of a society obsessed with movies, sex, and violence at home and in Vietnam. (Jonathan Warden, Robert De Niro, Gerritt Graham; director, Brian De Palma. Eastman Colour.)

*HARD CONTRACT (Fox) Slightly pretentious oddity of a metaphysical thriller, about a hired killer fulfilling a contract in Europe and confronting the morality of his trade. Limping direction, but a script which takes its attractive cast out on some rather intriguing limbs. (James Coburn, Lee Remick, Lilli Palmer, Burgess Meredith; director, S. Lee Pogostin. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.)

**JOHN AND MARY (Fox) Dustin Hoffman and Mia Farrow as two lovers coming to terms with each other during a rainy day in New York. Very pretty, sometimes prettified, gloss on an assortment of chic themes and accessories; easy to take, in its accomplished colour supplement way. (Director, Peter Yates. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.) Reviewed.

*LOOKING GLASS WAR, THE (Columbia) Spy being left out in the cold again in another trip into John Le Carré country. Fine, quirky characterisation and scripting in the British half, but falling about in absurdity when it gets to a Germany where everyone speaks ze broken english. (Christopher Jones, Ralph Richardson, Paul Rogers, Pia Degermark; director, Frank Pierson. In colour, Panavision.)

MAD ROOM, THE (Columbia) Plodding remake of *Ladies in Retirement* in which fashion has unfortunately dictated that the two delightfully dotty sisters be replaced by tiresomely troubled teenagers. Shelley Winters has moments of eccentric grandeur as the victim, but Stella Stevens labours as the companion with a guilty secret. (Michael Burns, Barbara Sammeth; director, Bernard Girard. Berkey Pathé Colour.)

MADWOMAN OF CHAILLOT, THE (Warner-Pathé) Screen version of Giraudoux's play about the victory of the humble and the crazed over power-mad oil speculators in Paris. Over-inflated to accommodate a starry cast, and ingenuously updated to include student riots, the soap bubble fable becomes a swamping detergent lather. (Katharine Hepburn, Danny Kaye, Yul Brynner, Edith Evans; director, Bryan Forbes. Technicolor, Panavision.)

MAGIC CHRISTIAN, THE (Commonwealth United) Slick, smart, ineffably garbled version of the Terry Southern novel, with Peter Sellers demonstrating man's eternal folly. As remote from Southern's coolly blue and mordant wit as *Candy* ever was. (Ringo Starr; director, Joseph McGrath. Technicolor.)

MAGUS, THE (Fox) Ponderous adaptation of the John Fowles novel about a self-centred young man who is subjected to a sort of spiritual therapy—by way of a series of seemingly supernatural charades—by a mysterious sage on a Greek island. Michael Caine looks understandably mystified as the plot thickens to the point of solidity. (Anthony Quinn, Candice Bergen, Anna Karina; director, Guy Green. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.)

MICHAEL AND HELGA (Eagle) Sequel to *Helga*, in which the lady graduates from elementary sex education to the myriad problems of modern marriage. Scenes from married life interspersed with maddeningly condescending and one-sided homilies on the perils of abortion, contraception *et al.* (Ruth Gassman, Felix Franchy; director, Erich F. Bender. Eastman Colour.)

MICHAEL KOHLHAAS (Columbia) Miscalculated version of Kleist's story about a 16th-century horse trader whose determined fight for individual justice provokes him to violence, arson and plunder. So overloaded with contemporary significance that the mediaeval background is superfluous. (David Warner, Anna Karina, Relia Basic; director, Volker Schlöndorff. Technicolor.)

****MY NIGHT WITH MAUD (Academy/Connoisseur) Another cool and cautionary tale—timid engineer repels advances of seductive divorcee to marry his ideal of Catholic womanhood—in which Rohmer explores some of the

discrepancies between principle and practice, morality and morals. Wittily scripted, impeccably acted, and pervaded with an understated irony. (Jean-Louis Trintignant, Françoise Fabian.)

***PIGSTY (Eagle) Bizarre, to say the least, Pasolini film in which the tale of a nomadic cannibal is rhymed with that of the son of a Nazi war criminal who dreams of political protest and finds erotic favour in the family pigsty. Open to various interpretations, and to accusations of over-simplification, but visually superb. (Pierre Clémenti, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Anne Wiazemsky. Eastman Colour.)

**POOKIE (Paramount) Thus, unfortunately, has *The Sterile Cuckoo* been retitled, highlighting the name of the heroine and a whimsical side to this mostly charming tale of a first romance which would be better forgotten. (Liza Minnelli, Wendell Burton; director, Alan J. Pakula. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

ROYAL HUNT OF THE SUN, THE (Rank) Christopher Plummer as the birdlike Inca king whose plumage withers after his encounter with Pizarro's band of Spaniards. The philosophical core of Peter Shaffer's play, Pizarro's identification with his prisoner, needs a high theatricality missing from this decently dull sub-spectacular. (Robert Shaw, Nigel Davenport; director, Irving Lerner. Technicolor.)

STAIRCASE (Fox) Lamentable vulgarisation of Charles Dyer's stage duologue between two squabbling, wittily bitching queers. Rex Harrison and Richard Burton camp it up no end, with direction to match. (Cathleen Nesbitt, Beatrix Lehmann; director, Stanley Donen. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.)

**TOPAZ (Rank) Hitchcock's 51st, about the Cuban missile crisis and the unmasking of Russia's man in high Gaullist circles. Ostensibly realistic, it actually comes across as a somewhat abstracted cruise over the waters of espionage, with a plot concocted on multiple levels of betrayal and duplicity. (Frederick Stafford, Dany Robin, John Forsythe. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

**TRUE GRIT (Paramount) John Wayne as an ageing, creaking Marshal who is shamed away from his fireside and out on to the trail by a spirited girl who shows him the meaning of true grit by her relentless pursuit of her father's murderer. A bit thin, but likeable. (Kim Darby, Glen Campbell; director, Henry Hathaway. Technicolor.)

**UNDEFEATED, THE (Fox) Lazily attractive Western, very well shot by William Clothier, about the aftermath of the Civil War when a Southerner (Rock Hudson) going to Mexico to continue the fight, and a Northerner (John Wayne) going to sell horses, meet and ultimately join forces against a common enemy. Fine performances from both leads. (Roman Gabriel, Tony Aguilar; director, Andrew V. McLaglen. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.)

*VIRGIN SOLDIERS, THE (Columbia) The usual message about boys becoming men in war, wrapped up in some good observation, some *Carry On* jokery, and some mawkishness. Neat portrayals of military types from Nigel Davenport, Michael Gwynn and Nigel Patrick. (Lynn Redgrave, Hywel Bennett; director, John Dexter. Technicolor.)

****VOIE LACTEE, LA (Planet) Buñuel's grand tour through the highways and byways of heresy, as two pilgrims travel in time and space towards the shrine of St. James. The Master at his most calmly masterly: lucid, beguiling, instructive, obsessive. (Paul Frankeur, Laurent Terzieff. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

*WINNING (Rank) Paul Newman as a racing driver who marries Joanne Woodward and then neglects her for his cars. Sympathetically acted home-grown motor racing film, with a feeling for the smell of petrol, amateurishly gaudy parades and the concrete drabness of small town motels. (Robert Wagner; director, James Goldstone. Technicolor, Panavision 70 mm.)

*WOMEN IN LOVE (United Artists) Ken Russell's confrontation with D. H. Lawrence, which sometimes (when essaying Lawrence's purpler passages) looks surprisingly like a meeting of minds. Total effect dependent on decoration, pastiche, musical allusion, show and excess, rather than the hard stuff of character. (Oliver Reed, Alan Bates, Glenda Jackson, Jennie Linden. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

**Z (Warner-Pathé) Unashamedly opportunist reconstruction of the murder of a left-wing Greek politician and subsequent explosive revelations of connivance and corruption in high places. Glossily efficient, deliberately melodramatic style ensures that the message will not be lost on any audience. (Jean-Louis Trintignant, Yves Montand, Georges Géret; director, Costa-Gavras. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

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